HUMANISM IN INDIAN THOUGHT

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HUMANISM IN INDIAN THOUGHT

N.K. DEVARAJA



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To

Prof. Margaret Chatterjee

In admiration for her insightful and sensitive representation of Gandhi's Religious Thought & Personality

I think that, if we are to feel at home in the world after the present war, we shall have to admit Asia to equality in our thoughts, not only politically, but culturally. What changes this will bring about, I do not know, but I am convinced that they will be profound and of the greatest importance.

Bertrand Russell in *A History of Western Philosophy*, p. 420.

Scheme of Transliteration

The usual scheme of transliteration of Sanskrit words in Roman characters has been slightly modified for the benefit of readers who are not orientalists. Thus ऋ has been written as ṛi, च् as ch, छ् as chh, ष् as sh, and संन्यास as sannyāsa instead of ṛ, c, ch, s, and saṁnyāsa respectively In Part II diacritical marks have been sparingly used, if at all.

Abbreviations

Most of the abbreviations, sparingly used in the body of the book or in footnotes, will be readily intelligible. The following occur in Part One:

Bṛihad.	for	*Bṛihadāranyaka*
Chhānd.	for	*Chhāndogya*
N.	for	*Nipāya*
S.N.	for	*Sutta Nipāta*
Up.	for	*Upanishad*

Foreword

IN the West "Humanism" as a philosophy has tended to define itself in conscious opposition to Theism—to the belief in (affirmation of, faith in, celebration of) a "supernatural" creator divinity. Its rather tiresome tirade against a highly simplistic straw-man interpretation of religion, its naive embrace of science as the sole truth-telling key to nature, and its sometimes sentimental upholding of Man as the supreme value, has left many philosophers—who actually do embrace much of this position in their daily lives—embarrassed. Professor Devaraja will have none of a simple-minded reading of religion. "The religious way of life," he writes, "of consciousness and response, seems to be bound-up with man's creative-imaginative nature which constantly impels him to go beyond the given and the present. . . ." Hence, he maintains that "the all important question facing the humanist is: Can humanism find a way to preserve and defend the best in the moral and spiritual traditions of mankind without invoking supernatural authority and sanction ?"

Professor Devaraja finds a basis for this humanism in many areas of traditional Indian thought. The all-important ideal of liberation, he states, "consists in the realization by the soul of its own pristine purity or essential perfection." He goes on to say that "The humanistic implications of the doctrine of *Jīvanmukti* are obvious. The highest perfection or fulfilment of which man is capable can be attained and enjoyed by him here in his earthly existence."

Part Two of Devaraja's work analyzes humanism in modern Indian thought, with specific reference to Tagore and Gandhi ("religious humanists"), M.N. Roy and Nehru ("secularist humanism") and concludes with his own "Creative Humanism." Whether or not

one accepts Devaraja's detailed treatment of India's past and present religious traditions, or even his confidence in the autonomy of (spiritual) man as a value-seeking and value-creating being, one cannot but be impressed by his sensitive concern for the betterment of mankind and his devotion, religiously inspired in its own way, to the fulfilling of that task.

"Humanism" certainly needs to be redefined today in both the West and the East. Professor Devaraja has set a high standard for others to follow in this work.

ELIOT DEUTSCH
University of Hawaii

Preface

THE Indian tradition in religio-philosophic thought is one of the richest in the world. This fact and phenomenon has been freely recognized and acclaimed by a number of unprejudiced scholarly writers and thinkers, both Western and Eastern, such as F. Max Müller and Paul Deussen (of Germany), Th. Stcherbatsky (of Russia), Rene Guenon (of France), D.T. Suzuki (of Japan), T.W. Rhys Davids and Edward Conze (of England)—to name but a few from among the galaxy of distinguished Orientalists. India has the distinction of having been the birth-place and cradle of several important religions; she has been the shelter and sanctuary of persecuted religious minorities; she continues to be the meeting-ground of major world religions. She gave rise to and nurtured several significant logico-metaphysical traditions associated with Vedic-Upanishadic and Āgamic forms of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

Philosophical speculations in India originated in the existential situation of suffering and in the desire to escape, on the one hand, from the suffering, and on the other, from limitations imposed by man's finite existence. This circumstance invests Indian philosophic thought with perennial interest and abiding significance for thinking men and women all over the world.

However, despite all the attention and praise bestowed on the religio-philosophic thought of India, it may be doubted if its essentially humanistic basis and significance have yet been fully unfolded, explained and appreciated India is one of the few civilized lands where philosophies of liberation divorced from theistic belief in a creator God were expounded and elaborated. It was here, again, that the grand system of Advaita Vedānta, elevating the *Ātman* within to the status of the First Principle of the universe,

was systematically developed, and the doctrine of *Jīvanmukti* (Liberation-in-life here on earth) was placed on secure metaphysical foundations in several systems of thought. Here, indeed, the author of the great epic *Mahābhārata*, the encyclopaedia of Indian moral-spiritual thought, felt free to proclaim: Nothing superior to man exists.

It is the aim and object of the present work, first, to uncover and highlight the humanistic elements present in ancient Indian systems of religio-philosophic thought, and second, to give an objective account of humanistic trends in twentieth century Indian thought. Undoubtedly, this work has been inspired by the belief that the world in general, and our own country in particular, stand in the need of more conscious adoption of the humanistic outlook and values which alone can ensure harmonious relations among diverse communities and cultures present in our land and promote co-operative effort for the moral, intellectual and material progress of the country commensurate with its size and importance as a member of civilized world community.

The more important philosophers and philosophies in the present day world, that concern themselves with human values and the destiny of man, claim to be humanistic. Thus, Jean Paul Sartre, the internationally known existentialist writer and thinker of France, considered his philosophical viewpoint to be humanistic. Quite a few interpreters of Karl Marx—to take another example—declare his dialectical materialism to be a type of humanism. One of the works of Jacque Maritain, the well-known representative of Neo-Thomism, bears the title *Integral Humanism*. Coming nearer home Rabindranath Tagore, who called one of his major reflective works *Religion of Man*, lays stress on the centrality of man in the apprehension of reality and truth. Mahatma Gandhi, identifying God with Truth, preached ethical religion like Kant, and made religion synonymous with the living service of suffering humanity. One main purpose of the present essay is to bring out the fact that the humanistic standpoint is not only not alien to our religio-philosophic tradition but inherent in it, and that the tradition can lend support to further progress of our thought in the direction of a humanistic world-view. The last chapter of the work presents the outlines of one variant of such a world-view, which has been developed by the present writer during the last two decades

This work was undertaken as a research project supported by the University Grants Commission; I take this opportunity to express my gratefulness to the Commission. In September 1981 the Burdwan University invited me to deliver Sri Aurobindo Seminar Lectures for a previous year on the subject mentioned in the title of this work. In December 1981 I delivered Third S. Abid Husain Memorial Lecture on "Humanism in Indian Religio-Philosophic Thought" under the auspices of Islam and Modern Age Society, New Delhi; I also delivered Maharshi Debendranath Tagore Lecture on "Upanishadic-Vedāntic Humanism" at Visva-bharti, Santiniketan, in the same month. All this attests a growing interest in the humanistic way of thought in our country. I thank all the above institutions for having extended their kind invitations to me.

The work received its final form (except for a few pages added in the Section on Gandhian Thought after I had joined the Indian Institute of Advanced Study at Shimla in March, 1987) at the University of Hawaii where I was Visiting Professor in the Philosophy Department for a year (1983-84). I herewith extend my cordial thanks to Professor David J. Kalupahana of Philosophy Department, Professor Cromwell Crawford of the Department of Religion, and Professor J.P. Sharma of the Department of History who were generous with their time and helpful suggestions in whatever form I needed them. I am particularly beholden to Professor Eliot Deutsch, Editor-in-Chief, *Philosophy East and West*, for contributing a Foreword to the book which, I hope, will be a connecting link between humanistic ways of thought in India and America.

Last but not least I gratefully record my indebtedness to the teachers and students of the Philosophy Department, Lucknow University, who, by their interested comments, criticisms and questionings in occasional discussions on the different topics dealt with in this book, encouraged me to give it the present form and dimensions.

N.K. DEVARAJA

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Introduction

THE term Humanism does not stand for a single, well-defined concept. It has meant different things in different periods of man's cultural history; it has also meant, and continues to mean, different things to writers and thinkers of diverse persuasions. However, in its most general connotation, humanism signifies a cluster of more or less vaguely defined attitudes and intellectual prejudices that characterized the European mind during the period called the Renaissance The Renaissance stood, in the first instance, for the revival of classical studies and the adoption of attitudes and values that had prevailed in the Greco-Roman world. This revival was accompanied by the rejection of the medieval value-patterns and, in some cases, the repudiation of the beliefs and dogmas that gave support to those patterns or values. The religious culture of the Middle Ages had, by and large, been otherworldly; wedded to the dogma of original sin, it stressed the innate depravity of man and his incapacity to work out his salvation by his own efforts. Like many other religions Christianity, as interpreted by the Church, deprecated man's life here on earth and condemned his involvement in mundane concerns and values. Man could not attain either knowledge or moral purity or salvation with the aid of his own reason, intelligence or will. In all matters crucial to his intellectual, moral and spiritual growth, the human individual had, and was advised, to depend on some Supernatural Power or Powers and the Revelation coming from a Supernatural Source which it was the duty and the privilege of the Church to interpret.

In all these matters the Renaissance man set himself in opposition, tacit if not avowed, to the Church, its beliefs and values. He

was inclined to assert the rights of the senses to the enjoyment of their objects, the right of the intellect to free inquiry and criticism and the right of reason to shape his thought and opinion. Thus the humanistic spirit of the Renaissance tended to foster critical attitude towards medievalism and to encourage individualism both in thought and in the conduct of life. It has been observed that the Renaissance marked 'the transitional movement in Europe between medieval and modern times.'[1] This means that the Renaissance paved the way for the emergence of the modern, scientific outlook, unfettered by the authority of the Church or Revelation. However, the humanistic spirit continued to grow and develop during the centuries after Renaissance, and constitutes an important undercurrent of varied modern outlook on man's life and destiny. Humanism, indeed, has undergone significant development, assuming a variety of forms, during the present century. Thus, F.C.S. Schiller of England propounded a type of humanism akin to pragmatism which latter received wider recognition and more or less supplanted Schiller's humanistic philosophy. Both the humanism of Schiller and the pragmatism of William James and others underlined the role of human interests and purposes in the organisation of ideas and in the validation of beliefs or of knowledge. Two important literary critics of America, Irving Babbit and Paul Elmer More, propounded their New Humanism which emphasized the ethical nature of what is essentially human in experience and conduct. Man should be contrasted with animals as much as with the mechanistic order of nature. The philosophic viewpoint of New Humanism has important implications for theory of literature and the theory of literary criticism.

We may now attempt to delineate the spirit of humanism, an enterprise safer than the attempt to give a precise definition of the concept. Humanism is an attitude towards and an approach to man's life and values regarded as phenomena confined to the earth As such it is characterized by interest in man, concern for man, and faith in man's reason and conscience for discriminating perception of truth and goodness. A typical humanist is a believer in the dignity of man, and is averse to advocating man's dependence on God either for worldly gains or for spiritual upliftment

[1]Webster's *Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, under renaissance.

or salvation. In fact, such a humanist is inclined to be atheistic; in recent times some of them, e.g., Corliss Lamont, have declared their position to be frankly naturalistic or even materialistic. Quite a few interpreters of Karl Marx—to take another example—declare his dialectical materialism to be a type of humanism. Jean Paul Sartre, the French representative of atheistic existentialism, also claimed his philosophical outlook to be humanistic. It is generally thought that humanism, considered as a philosophical creed, is opposed not only to supernaturalism and the religious world-view but also to religion as a way of life. Now it is well known that most of our ancient and medieval thought, both in Asia and in Europe, is pronouncedly religious in inspiration and form. If for once it be granted that there is an unbridgeable gulf between humanism on one side and the pursuit of religion on the other, it would follow that there was no possibility whatever of finding and uncovering the humanistic elements in the thought and culture of ancient and medieval times.

The reason why some scholars and writers see conflict between humanism and the religious world-view is their adherence to a particular conception of religion. This conception considers belief in a supernatural realm to be an essential ingredient of religion. That conception of religion has been accepted and propagated by quite a few influential scholars and thinkers. Thus Sir James G. Frazer, the famous anthropologist of religion, defines religion in the following words:

> By religion . . . . I understand a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life. Thus defined, religion consists of two elements, a theoretical and a practical, namely a belief in powers higher than man and an attempt to propitiate or please them.[1]

This definition of religion, it may be noted, makes religion an adjunct of man's pursuit of material goods or favours for the sake of which 'the powers superior to man' are sought to be propitiated. Indeed, the acts of propitiation, conciliation or worship are seldom disinterested. Man not only worships but also fears

[1]*The Golden Bough* (Abridged Edition, Macmillan, 1947), p. 50.

the gods or the single God for the simple reason that those beings are believed to have power both to confer benefits on him and to harm him. So conceived God or the gods are no different from the earthly rulers. It may be noted here that modern science has learned to control nature not through the agency of one or more supernatural beings but through tested, objective knowledge. In olden times, as Sir Frazer has noted, the counterpart of science was magic, which was seriously believed in and cultivated in the pre-modern or primitive societies. Here it is interesting to note that a magical conception of sacrifice, i.e. the conception that religious sacrifices have magical efficacy, is to be met with in the *Brāhmaṇas*, a class of exegetical works that claimed to propound the science of sacrifice supposed to be embodied in the hymns of the Vedas.

One reason why Frazer thought it proper to define religion with reference to supernatural powers was the fact that he lived in the environment dominated by theistic religions, another reason, of course, was his being concerned mainly with the primitive societies. Anthropologists in general, indeed, make poor students of the higher, civilized societies. In addition to the interested propitiaters and worshippers of gods, the more civilized religions are also noted for producing saints and mystics who seek communion with and/or absorption into Godhead as the culminating point of their spiritual growth and development. A strictly utilitarian conception of religion cannot possibly do justice to the purely spiritual aspirations of ascetically inclined saints. Furthermore, if the religious quest be tied up purely with the pursuit of the utilitarian goods, then, like magic, it would stand in the danger of being supplanted by science and thus disappearing from the civilized societies. Taking a broader view of utility, some sociologists look upon religion as a means of adaptation to the phenomena of *uncertainty* in the conditions of man's living or the *contingency* of his existence as also the phenomena of *scarcity* and *powerlessness* characterizing individual and social existence. Viewed as a response to these religions "is seen as the most basic 'mechanism' of adjustment to the aleotary and frustrating elements."[1]

[1]Thomas F.O. Dea, *The Sociology of Religion* (New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India Private Limited, 1969), p. 5.

Thus conceived, religion may not be taken to be incompatible with humanism. However, when the adjustment in question is sought to be achieved with the aid of a supernatural power, presiding over what appear to us to be the uncertainties and limitations of our life, the humanist is compelled to part company with traditional religion The aforesaid kind of response to the uncertainties and frustrations of life or existence is considered by Freud to be infantile or immature, which leads him to declare religion to be an illusion destined to pass away with the march of civilization. Other sociologists, such as Talcott Parsons, probably under the influence of recent theological interpretations of theistic beliefs, attribute to religion or religious consciousness a transcendental reference to something lying "beyond" the empirical order of existence. This view, again, is incompatible with humanism.

It seems to us that man's drive for higher and more perfect life that has been traditionally associated with religion cannot be assimilated wholly to the needs and responses of his bio-social constitution or existence. In its higher forms, the religious impulse in man resembles rather his aesthetic impulses on one side and his capacity for the detached contemplation, expressed in philosophic wonder and reflection, on the other. The aesthetic and the contemplative impulses may operate in separation from one another, they may also fuse together to give rise to a new, more comprehensive type of response to total situation. Man's sense of wonder may be evoked by things beautiful, it may also be evoked by the complexities of relationship subsisting between the subject and the object or the knower and the known, the part and the whole, the cause and the effect, and the like, the latter kind of wonder may easily pass into an acute sense of perplexity. The religious consciousness seems to arise when the wonder and perplexity characterizing the contemplating philosophic mind are carried to the plane of emotional apprehension, directed on the totalities of life and the world in their intricate living relationships. The religious mode of experience, it seems, involves in its totality man's aesthetic and contemplative nature on one side and his vital imaginative response on the other side.

The religious way of life, of consciousness and response, seems to be bound up with man's creative-imaginative nature which

constantly impels him to go beyond the given and the present and to visualise and live his being in relation to the ever-expanding wholes or totalities, constituted of meanings anchored to imaginative constructions of the entire spatio-temporal order including man's dramatic historical past and his traumatic fear of death.

Religion, thus, is an affair between man and the Universe; but the Universe is not an Absolute, given once for all in man's sensory experience. On the contrary, man himself is constantly drawing and redrawing the outlines of the cosmic reality to which he feels constrained to respond. This reality, as already stated, is primarily a whole of meanings of diverse sorts welded together under a conceptual scheme. However, this scheme, which is being ever expanded, recast and modified under the impact of new discoveries, growing expectations and developing ideals of man, is seldom, perhaps never, completely satisfying to his mind and heart. There is always, on one side, a residue of mystery enveloping the things unrevealed or only partly revealed to the human vision; on the other side there remain unreconciled or only precariously balanced interests dividing individuals and groups, the latter themselves remaining subject to pulls and pushes of conflicting desires, ambitions and aspirations. It is not denied that the religious impulse or the religious consciousness is directed on something taken to be objective, but the object itself is, more or less, a projection of the group mind struggling to articulate itself at a particular point in its historical course Needless to say this articulation, taking the form of conceptual formulations of first principles, positive and normative, is necessarily determined by the prevailing notions about the world and the prejudices as to proper relationship between groups and classes in society on the one hand and the members within the family on the other. In older societies and also during the Middle Ages the principles and powers that were taken as governing the course of the cosmos, were also supposed to have jurisdiction over the affairs of men. Thus it was that the human laws enforced by ruling clans, classes or even individuals came to be invested with divine sanctions—witness the widespread belief, in ancient and medieval societies, either in the divinity of the king or in the divine sanctions behind the status and authority of the king. Moral principles, including the rules and regulations governing

the interrelations among men, were usually assigned divine origin. It was argued by the prophetic teachers and the interpreters and spokesmen of religion—and it is argued still—that man could not know about *dharma* or morality except from a supernatural revelation Wedded to this belief the early Christian Fathers were puzzled to find high moral principles enunciated in the writings of the great Greek philosophers headed by Socrates and Plato.

The all-important question facing the humanist is: Can humanism find a way to preserve and defend the best in the moral and spiritual traditions of mankind without invoking supernatural authority and sanction? It can be argued that the Greeks, while not claiming to be in possession of a revelation, still believed in a supernatural order of beings, in the pantheon of gods and goddesses and also in the supreme Godhead. Likewise the Vedic Aryans believed in a plurality of gods and goddesses, one of whom, Varuṇa, was supposed to be the guardian of the moral law. The culture of the Greeks that influencedthe Renaissance men, we are suggesting, was not humanistic in the philosophic sense. On the other hand, the moral picture of the Renaissance èlite, as drawn by the great historian Jacob Burckhardt, is not at all reassuring. It may be remembered here that the disturbingly realistic political writer and thinker, Machiavelli, is a spokesman of morals prevailing among rulers during the period of the Renaissance. In one place, he openly declared: 'We Italians are irreligious and corrupt above others'. As an explanation of the situation he adds: 'because the Church and her representatives set us the worst examples'.[1] Having quoted this Burckhardt asks whether it should be added 'because the influence exercised by the antiquity was in this respect unfavourable'? According to the great historian the antiquity influenced the moral ideas or values of the Renaissance men in the following manner: It induced them to substitute for holiness the cult of historical greatness. Again, a strong bulwork against evil was the sentiment of honour which was cherished by the highly gifted. This sentiment which, according to Burckhardt's shrewd observation, 'is an enigmatic mixture of conscience and egotism', often survives in better men and women after they have

[1]Quoted by Jacob Burckhardt in *The Civilization of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd, 1951), p. 262.

lost the Christian virtues of faith, love and hope. The sentiment, Burckhardt avers, 'has become, in a far wider sense than is commonly believed, a decisive code of conduct in the minds of the cultivated Europeans of our own day, and many of those who yet hold faithfully by religion and morality are unconsciously guided by this feeling in the gravest decisions of their lives.'

Having made these observations, Burckhardt proceeds to relate, with his characteristic thoroughness and with extensive documentary evidence, the profligacy of the lives of the Renaissance men and women. The Italian of this period was given to reckless gambling, endowed with a vivid imagination he never forgot or forgave a wrong done to him, and greatly relished wreaking vengeance on the wrong-doer. Further, one act of vengeance would lead to another as a measure of retaliation. 'And such "Vendetta" handed down from father to son, and extended to friends and distant relations, were not limited to the lower classes, but reached to the highest' (p 266). Great ingenuity was often employed in the service of 'bella vendetta' and, in addition to the satisfaction of the sense of justice, admiration was also sought for successful manipulation of the circumstances. The Renaissance lovers rejoiced in their success with married women and these women did not mind deceiving their husbands particularly when the latter were guilty of unfaithfulness towards them Again, little sanctity was attached to life and assassinations of rivals and opponents, often through the hired agents, were frequent The Renaissance was an age of unbridled individualism and instances were not wanting when wickedness, delighting in crimes for their own sake, found naked expression. Needless to say, the spiritual threats and penalties had ceased to have any deterrent effect on the perpetrators of crime. We have now to face the query: Can the moral depravity of the Renaissance be blamed on its humanistic outlook? Burckhardt has a tendency to see or draw a sharp contrast between Renaissance Italy and the rest of Europe where medieval culture still prevailed. The soundness of this contrast has been questioned by some recent scholars. Thus J. Huizinga sees several important points of resemblance between the values and attitudes of the Renaissance and those that had characterised the culture of the Middle Ages.[1] Among these were: the thirst for

[1]See his *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (Pelican Books, 1955), esp. pp. 70 ff.

honour and glory coupled with the propensity to hero-worship, the chivalrous ideal which was akin to the aspiration to the splendours of antique life, the custom of fighting duels and a general love of excitement and violence. As we have seen—Machiavelli attributes the corruption of his times to the exhibition of moral depravity in their conduct by the representatives of the Church. Here is a graphic description of the moral situation during the Middle Ages:

> The hardships of medieval life, combined with the emphasis on hereafter, made life seem much less valuable to people than it does now. It was a rather coarse and brutal age.... Punishments were severe with maiming, breaking on the reel and hanging relatively common for offences that today would be punished only with imprisonment, if at all. Torture was used in Church-courts as well as royal courts. Private warfare ... still survived in the general practice of dueling. Drunkenness and gluttony were open to those who could afford them and a much sought for escape among those who could not. Thievery ranged . . from the cut-purses' flinching at the country-fair, to grand piracy on the high seas and embezzlement and corruption at all levels of government.[1]

Such was the state of morals in an age when (the Christian) religion reigned supreme. The Church carried on the lucrative business of selling indulgences; it set up Inquisition to punish heretics or the voice of dissent. Licentious priests were not unknown and papal 'nepotism' had become notorious. Indeed, it was the widespread moral corruption in the Church that provoked the wrath of Martin Luther and brought about the Reformation.

It may be remembered here that excessively harsh punishment for crimes was a feature probably common to many older societies. Such punishment is frankly recommended by Manu who is by no means unaware of finer forms of virtuous life. The virtue of forgiveness is frequently lauded by the Indian teachers of morality, so is the virtue of pity or compassion. Manu's depiction of the character of the ideal student or the brahmachārin,

[1]Louis Gettschalk and Donald Lach, *Europe and the Modern World,* Vol. I (Bombay: Allied Pacific Private Ltd., 1962), pp. 29-30.

as also his delineation of the character of the Sannyāsin, are indicative of a highly developed moral sensitivity of the people he represented. This sensitivity seems to have co-existed with harsher, differential attitudes towards the so-called śūdra and other low castes. Also, it is reasonable to suppose that Machiavellian viewpoint and values were not unknown to the ruling circles in ancient India.

From the above account, it may be concluded that the belief in a supernatural order of reality and access to a revelation do not always ensure adherence to superior moral-spiritual values in group life. There are probably other important factors, economic, political and social, that constitute necessary conditions of a just, peaceful and prosperous social order. So far as religio-philosophical beliefs are concerned, they are likely to influence conduct only so long as their validity has remained unquestioned, i e only so long as they receive general acceptance by the intelligentsia. During the times of general unrest and intellectual questioning, beliefs and dogmas handed down by tradition cease to carry conviction, which condition leads gradually to loosening of the hold of traditional norms and values.

It should be said to the credit of the humanists of the time that, as against the Pope and the clergy, they tended to side with the reformers. It was believed, reports Lord Acton, 'that the Renaissance prepared the Reformation, that Luther had only hatched Erasmian egg.'[1]

A great gift of the Renaissance to the European mind was the sense of optimism. This sense was accompanied by the revival of man's faith in himself, i.e in his intelligence and reason. The reawakening of this faith, that had been systematically undermined by the Church's emphasis on the doctrine of the original sin and the innate depravity of man, was due to the discovery of classical letters on the one hand, and the geographical-astronomical discoveries and important mechanical inventions on the other. It is, indeed, surprising that even unquestioned faith in God should fail to sustain man's faith in himself and his destiny. It seems that the mood and philosophy of optimism have definite correlation with the material-economic conditions on one side, and the

[1]John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, *Ten Lectures on Modern History* (London· Macmillan, 1920), p. 17.

prevalence of order and justice in society on the other side. These conditions came to exist in Western Europe, particularly in England, with the occurrence of the industrial revolution, with concomitant expansion of trade and political power. The prosperity achieved by the colonial powers of Europe was a main factor responsible for the formulation of the "philosophies of progress" by the representative Western thinkers.

We conclude, then, that religion in itself is ineffectual in promoting and maintaining either a high level of morality or a sense of optimistic self-confidence in a society. In the modern world while the spectacular material progress made possible by the growth of science and technology has tended to make modern man self-reliant with faith in rational-scientific investigation and hard work, revolutionary experiments with forms of government and with such socio-economic institutions as marriage, taxation, property relations, relations between labour and capital, pupil and teacher, crime and punishment etc., have tended now to encourage optimism and now to induce despair in thinkers and reformers in different regions of the earth. While the developing countries are finding it more and more difficult to satisfy the rising material expectations and aspirations of their people, the so-called affluent societies, suffering from surfeit of wealth and leisure, from ennui and from lack of sufficient warmth and depth in human relations, have their own burden of psycho-spiritual problems to cope with. The confrontation of the two classes of people and societies—for there are oases of affluence in the former societies as there are tracts of poverty in the latter—generates, in the spheres of both political and economic relationship, new sets of problems having global repercussions.

There are two kinds of beliefs or belief-systems that affect man's conscious life, practical and ethico-spiritual There is a belief-system pertaining to the material world of nature and there are beliefs about ideals and values together with their sources and sanctions. Religious faith in God, heaven, hell and the like has, during the past ages, acted as a bridge connecting the two types of belief-systems. Physical science, growing at rapid pace by the method of experimentation and verifiable hypothesis, gradually discredited and replaced the mythological-religious view of the functioning of the world of nature. During the nineteenth century

the biblical account of genesis reluctantly gave way to the hypothesis or the theory of evolution in biology. That theory dealt a final blow to the religious doctrine or dogma of creationism, and put a long question mark before the theistic assertion of the existence of the Creator God.

As a consequence of these upheavals in the cognitive horizon of man, the aforesaid twin systems of beliefs stand separated by an unbridgeable gulf. Hence the lament about two cultures between which the intellectual elite of our time seem to be divided. The scientist, committed to a rigorously realistic description and explanation of nature and of the actual in human affairs, finds himself out of sympathy with airy talk about values and ideals; likewise the sensitive student of the humanities, rejoicing in disciplined expressions of beauty and in the contemplation of virtue and holiness on one side and the imaginative constructions of the contemplative-meditative philosophic mind on the other finds the scientist's enthusiastic absorption in the inert order of the material forces and phenomena, an incomprehensibly inane and dull affair. Nor is the modern scholarly lover of the humanities able to endorse the faith of the idealistically inclined philosophers and religious men who see manifestations of Godhead, the Idea or the Absolute in the beauties and workings of nature.

Can humanism provide a meeting-ground for the votaries of the two cultures? The philosophy of humanism, properly developed and elaborated, should at any rate essay the tremendous task of synthesizing our factual scientific knowledge with the value intuitions of our species. The synthesis should finally result in a satisfactory, total world-view and a philosophy of life acceptable to the almost cynically demanding and insistent sense of evidence characteristic of our age. Viewed in this perspective the problem of values and that of synthesis of factual and evaluating norms assumes an epistemological dimension. The query as to the reality of norms and ideas and of the values planned to be realised also gives rise to ontological issues unknown to traditional metaphysics

It is not possible to find instances of unadulterated humanistic philosophy in ancient and medieval cultural traditions, Eastern or Western. On the other hand no reflective tradition, showing modicum of concern for the happiness and quality of man's life,

can be wholly devoid of humanistic elements. Nor need the fact that the older cultures were largely or mainly religious, discourage the humanist from studying them, unless humanism is, by definition, made incompatible with religion. Contrary to this we believe that true humanism should be not only reluctant but unwilling to exclude any important human concern or institution, that has played a significant role in man's cultural history, from its purview. Humanistic thinkers, indeed, may no more succeed in dislodging religion from men's minds than did Plato succeed in banishing poetry from the Republic of letters. We shall see, during the course of our studies, that the Indian tradition is particularly rich in suggestions for the reconstruction of the religious attitude along the humanistic lines.

Until recent times religion has probably been the most important factor affecting and regulating the lives of the people. Even today religion remains a force to be reckoned with. This is obvious in the case of the Islamic nations; the more orthodox Christians, particularly the priests and the clergy, continue to have missionary zeal for spreading their religion. In our country, apart from the Mohammedans and the Christians, such relatively small religious communities as the Sikhs and the Jainas are highly conscious of their religious identity. In fact, apart from a minority of atheistically or agnostically inclined intellectuals, most of the people even in the present century continue to believe, in one form or another, in the reality of trans-phenomenal, transcendental entities. Indeed, in most of the cultures, religious life and values have traditionally been bound up with belief in and worship of such entities Such religions or religious traditions find it difficult to support the humanistic outlook. (One form of conflict is that between serving God and serving man) That is why the few intellectuals in the West claiming to be humanists feel compelled to sever their connection from orthodox Christianity. But in this respect the Indian religious tradition may claim to be more varied, more liberal and tolerant. India, indeed, has, intellectually, a relatively maturer tradition of religious thought than the Semetic and the Christian world. Here, centuries before Christ, Mahavira and Gautama the Buddha as also the founders of the Sāṅkhya system propounded religious philosophies not committed to belief in a Creator God. This is one reason why modern humanism can derive inspiration

and support from India's cultural tradition. Another reason, as we shall see, is the peculiar metaphysical conception of liberation or perfection elaborated by the more important philosophical systems of this land.

Here yet another characteristic of our cultural tradition may be noted. While the metaphysical world-views propounded by the representative thinkers of the so-called śramaṇa or ascetic culture are more helpful to humanism as an intellectual creed, the almost pagan outlook on life inherent in the Vedic-Aryan culture represented by the founders of the arts of music, dance and drama and the science and art of love, is likely to be more conducive to the enrichment of life (regulated and disciplined, of course, by awareness of appropriate norms and standards) that are endorsed by wiser forms of humanism.

The point of stressing the humanistic aspects of traditional Indian culture is to generate in the minds of our intelligentsia, including those who are impressed with the greatness of the tradition and desire that the modern Indian life and thought should have some sort of continuity with that tradition, a pro-attitude towards humanistic way of thought and life Among the religiously inclined teachers and thinkers of modern India, probably nobody has contributed more to the advancement of humanism than Mahatma Gandhi. His ambiguous attitude towards God as traditionally conceived has given a radically new orientation to the Indian spiritual tradition. Tagore's conception of Godhead, Absolute or Brahman, which probably is nearer to Hegelian world-view than to that of the Vedānta, does not suffer from Gandhian ambiguity; still he manages to incorporate a good deal of humanism in his conception of man and of worthy life. Among the pure humanistic thinkers that modern India has produced Jawahar Lal Nehru and M.N Roy are preeminent. Both these persons were deeply concerned to reconstruct Indian society with the cooperation and support of the people, which enterprise could not possibly succeed without a change in their values and attitudes. Roy and Nehru were both avowed atheists; still both were highly regarded by Indian intelligentsia (so were some other politicians and political thinkers, e g. Acharya Narendra Dev and Jayaprakash Narain). This liberal attitude towards atheistic inclinations undoubtedly derives support from the rich and varied tradition in

our religious thought, and from the long tradition of tolerance toward such thought fostered by the leading spokesmen of the dominant Hindu religion through the ages.

Though an advocate of the scientific attitude towards life and society, Nehru was concerned mainly to improve the enonomic conditions through industrialisation on one side, and a juster distribution of wealth on the other side. He did not feel called upon to clearly formulate and defend his peculiar attitude towards life's values, individual and social. He had neither the time nor the inclination to delve deep into the epistemological foundations of his outlook on life, history and civilization. Roy, however, felt drawn towards such problems and tried to develop a philosophy of science and a philosophy of civilization or history.

A responsible and serious philosopher of humanism should occupy himself with the questions and queries about values that have agitated and intrigued the human mind through the ages. Some of these questions are not receiving due attention even from professional philosophers of our time. Thus while the logical positivists and the philosophers of science alike have been greatly concerned to investigate the conditions of meaningful utterance and valid descriptions and generalizations, they have tended to ignore, or dismiss in a cavalier fashion, problems relating to the validity or propriety of evaluative pronouncements in moral and aesthetic spheres To our mind, the special task facing a humanistic thinker of our time is this: to discover and formulate norms and principles that would account for generally or more universally perceived distinctions among expressions of moral and spiritual excellence. Instead of seeking to explain them away, the responsible humanistic thinker should seek to bring new light to the understanding of the more important moral and spiritual categories, e.g. those of duty, obligation and virtue, the sacred and the holy etc., and of the related attitudes of appreciation, admiration, reverence, adoration, even worship. While seeking to understand and assess a particular scheme of humanistic thought the careful reader may legitimately ask: How far does it illuminate and show the way to the fulfilment of our higher moral and spiritual aspirations?



PART ONE

HUMANISM IN ANCIENT INDIAN THOUGHT



CHAPTER 1

Upanishadic-Vedāntic Humanism: The Metaphysical Roots

IN the extensive literature of the Upanishads parts of which are a delightful blend of religio-philosophic and mystical reflections and utterances, the Indian mind shows its first awareness of the problem of the nature and destiny of man. The number of the Upanishads is too large, one or several hundreds according to different counts, but only about thirteen of these are taken to be authoritative and authentic, being genuine parts of the Vedic literature. Of these ten have been commented upon by Śaṅkarāchārya, the most important exponent and spokesman of the Advaitic trend in Upanishadic thought It happens though that practically all the interpreters of the three major Vedāntic texts, with the single exception of Madhvāchārya (1199-1278) are upholders of some sort of non-dualistic or monistic view of reality.

The aforesaid awareness is not to be met with in the pre-Upanishadic texts, the Vedas proper and the *Brāhmaṇas* which, particularly the former, in addition to being the sacred scriptures of the Hindus, have special significance as the oldest books that have survived in their unadulterated original form. The hymns of the Vedas, the oldest among which is the *Rigveda*, represent the sentiments, attitudes and beliefs of people with simple minds yet uncorrupted by inconvenient questionings and undisturbed by troublesome doubts. Not that the authors of the Vedic hymns do not ask questions at all; these questions, however, relate mostly

to gods and goddesses and, on some rare occasions, to the architect or creator and the creation of the world. In a few hymns the question is raised as to the ultimate substance or the first cause of the world. One hymn of the *Rigveda* hints at the presence of the sceptics who questioned the existence or reality of Indra, the most powerful and the frequently invoked of the Vedic gods. As is well known the religion of the Veda is frankly polytheistic, but there are hymns that strongly suggest the conception of a single, all-comprehending God or Godhead, that receives various names or designations, e.g Prajāpati, Hiranyagarbha Viśvakarman, and Purusha. The hymns mentioning the first cause or the creator generally take for granted the existence of that cause or the creator God, and proceed to mention the details how the more familiar entities of the world flow or emerge from that source. Probably the only exception to this is the famous 'Hymn of Non-existence,' the so-called Nāsadīya Sūkta (*Rigveda*, X.129), claimed to be probably the earliest expression of the genuinely philosophical mood and attitude in the history of world thought. The hymn begins with a half-sceptical, wondering note that in the beginning or before creation 'there was neither Aught nor Nought, neither Being, nor Non-Being; there was no atmosphere nor sky . . there was neither death nor immortality, neither night nor day There was, however, darkness concealed in darkness,' etc. Nevertheless the hymn affirms that there was some one principle 'which breathed by its own power-without wind '

We are not concerned here to trace the progress of Vedic religious thought from polytheism to monotheism and, in the later hymns, to monism. From our point of view, the thing to be noted is that the gaze of the Vedic poet-seers is directed mainly outward; they are greatly impressed by the spectacle of the world of nature which evokes in their minds mixed sentiments of wonder, aesthetic delight and terror. Attributing the occurrences in nature, now pleasing and beneficial, now fearful and destructive to beings or powers capable of likes and dislikes, resentment and anger as also kindness and affection like themselves, the authors of the hymns imagined gods and goddesses of diverse temperaments and endowed with varied characters and capacities. Apart from Indra, the powerful rain-god who could bestow or withhold the life-giving showers, and also help his devotees to win battles, the Vedic ṛishis developed the

conception of another important god who came to be looked upon as the guardian of the moral law. The significant concept of *ṛita* to be met with in several hymns of the *Rigveda*, designated for their authors both the order or regularity found in nature and the moral law regulating the lives of men The violation of the latter provoked the wrath of Varuna and invited punishment from him.

It is clear from the foregoing account that the centre of the world-stage as conceived by the Vedic Aryans is occupied by over a score of gods and goddesses who rule over the course of physical nature on one side and that of men's lives on earth on the other side. Genuine sentiments of fear and devotion bind the denizens of this world to the gods above Occasionally, indeed, the Aryan priests and poets feel dissatisfied with the multiplicity of the supernatural entities or powers projected by their religious imagination. The feeling led them to conceive a divinity or divine energy that fused the many gods and goddesses into a unity of essence (*Rigveda*, II.55), it also induced them to develop several conceptions of the unitary cause or creator of the cosmos Throughout their reflections, however, their attention continued to be directed on things outside the human world which circumstance prevented them from specifically raising the questions concerning the nature and destiny of man himself. Thus, they have vague notions of an 'other' world to which the dead ones are supposed to go and where the ancestors are imagined to have their abode. And yet, so far as the actual, lived life was concerned, the Aryans at that time were interested primarily in their affairs and fortunes here on earth. Both their prayers and petitions to gods were intended to coax those beings into conferring material benefits, e.g property, progeny, long life and victory over enemies, on them The universe as conceived by them does not assign any important place to man. On the other hand, the earthly life constitutes the central concern for the Vedic Aryans. Should this latter attitute towards life be called humanistic? Perhaps not, for it is neither rooted in, nor supported by the peculiar world-view entertained by them.

TRANSITION TO THE UPANISHADS

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or the materialistic aspects of the early Vedic culture. The priests and poets of the *Rigveda*, while now and then addressing their petitions to the gods, are yet moved by the spirit of worship coupled with feelings of awe or fear, in their approach to those gods or divinities. According to Rudolph Otto, the celebrated author of *The Idea of the Holy*, the aforesaid feelings are important elements in the religious consciousness However, as the emphasis on the importance of the sacrifice grew, the religious aspect of the relationship between the performer of the sacrifice and the deity came to occupy a subordinate place. The treatises called the *Brāhmanas* occupy themselves mainly with descriptions of sacrificial rites and minute details as to their modes of performance. Directly and indirectly they became responsible for the propagation of the view that the sacrificer obtained the material benefits from the correct performance of the sacrifice itself, rather than from the deity invoked during the performance. This view of the real source of the material benefits was systematically encouraged by the priests who received considerable fees from the patrons for whom the sacrifices were supposed to be performed. Thus the cult of sacrifice, developed along these lines, was a step farther towards materialism. A similar cult, allied with magical rather than sacrificial rites, was prevalent in the culture or cultural region represented in the *Atharva Veda*.

The Upanishads, particularly the more important among them, mark a two-fold break or departure, not too abrupt perhaps, from the world-view and the values entertained and cherished by the authors of the *Atharva Veda* and the *Brāhmaṇas*. The break or departure seems to be conditioned by a feeling of dissatisfaction and a sense of disillusionment in respect of material gains and possessions. The disillusionment leads them to question the values or value-attitudes propagated by the votaries of the cult of sacrifice which, in its turn, prompts them to raise afresh the question of the meaning and goal of life The latter question being inseparable from the query concerning the nature of man, or the human self, that self becomes the preeminent object of the metaphysical inquiry inaugurated by the Upanishadic teachers An important consequence of the emergence of this interest in the nature of self is a corresponding diminution or weakening of involvement in questions relating to the creation and administration of the world and its affairs. Not that these questions, particularly the one concerning

the origin of the world and the related question concerning the cause or the First Cause of the universe, has disappeared from the minds of the Upanishadic seers; but there is a marked change in the context containing references to these matters. The changed context is that of the intention to delineate the character of the *Ātman* or *Brahman*—the two terms being often used interchangeably—regarded as the ground of the phenomenal world. Thus the *Taittirīya Upanishad*, in the section called 'Brahmānanda Vallī,' having stated that the knower of Brahman attains the highest goal, goes on to define Brahman as the existent, of the nature of knowledge, the infinite After this, it substitutes the term Ātman for Brahman, and proceeds to indicate the order in which different cosmical entities, e g. *Ākāśa* or space, *Vāyu* or air, fire, water and earth issue or emanate from one another. At a later stage Brahman is defined as, or identified with, food (*annam*), vital airs (*prāṇa*), *vijñāna* or consciousness, and finally, *ānanda* or bliss The last definition is followed by the celebrated statement· From Bliss or *Ānanda* do the elements proceed; thus produced, they are sustained in their existence by Bliss; they finally reach and enter into the same *Ānanda* or the Principle of Bliss The important thing to note here is the total identification of Brahman and Ātman with one another. According to Śaṅkara, the earliest known and the most important commentator on the principal Upanishads, the intention of the Section, and similar Sections in other Upanishads, is not so much the delineation of the order in which various cosmic entities spring or emanate from the Primal Cause, as the affirmation of the identity of Brahman and Ātman.[1]

It may be noted that in the *Aitareya Upanishad* (I.1) creation of the world is attributed directly to Ātman; the term Brahman occurs only towards the end of the third part of the first chapter. Similarly, in the *Bṛihadāranayka Upanishad* (I.4.1 and 1.4.7) it is stated that in the beginning the Ātman alone existed. Elsewhere (e.g. in 1.4.10) Brahman takes the place of Ātman, and is stated to have existed in the beginning Nor do these Upanishads feel the need to offer any explanation for using one term or the other, which shows their thorough commitment to the doctrine of the identity of the two Considering the objection that the several

[1]Vide, Śankara's Introduction to his commentary on the *Aitareya Upanishad*, Chapter II.

Upanishads offer divergent accounts of the order in which entities proceed from the First Cause, Śaṅkara observes. 'One does not stand to gain anything from the knowledge of the story or stories of creation; On the contrary—and this idea is present in all the Upanishads—the knowledge of the oneness of Ātman (i.e. the knowledge that there is only one Ātman which is identical with Brahman) leads to immortality as its fruit.'[1] The conclusion is that the primary concern of the Upanishads, at any rate as interpreted by Śankara, is the affirmation of the identity of Ātman and Brahman, and not the relating of the story of creation.[2] Speaking technically, Śaṅkara declared the different accounts of creation to be sorts of *Arthavāda*, i.e motivated statements intended as inducements to the reader to undertake or abstain from a course of action.

Since the Ātman is identical with Brahman, it is immaterial from the standpoint of the Upanishads whether they exhort the spiritual aspirant to investigate the nature of Brahman or Ātman However, Brahman as the cause of the world seems to be rather a remote entity to inquire into, so the more important or better own statements of the older Upanishads generally enjoin know- or investigating the nature of the Ātman. In fact, particularly e older Upanishads, the term Ātman seems to be used more ently than Brahman, which shows greater importance of the r as the object of inquiry. This may, among other things, be to indicate a shift towards the subjective as against the

evious footnote
d in the perspective of religious history the Upanishadic affirmation identity, i e. of the divinity of man, was a tremendous achievement ea has long been a blasphemy and heresy to Christianity and to this official Islam. Compare: 'The divinization of man was at first made vely and hesitatingly. Throughout the late Middle Ages and much of naissance it was accompanied by recurrent feelings of bad conscience. thirteenth century the sense of blasphemy was still mediated by a apprehension of God's presence in all things . . But the fourteenth generally envisaged God as a real but absent Governor of the Uni- nd this endowed the human confiscation of the divine attributes with racter of a rebellion . punishable by eternal damnation' etc.
Wilson H. Coates, Haydon V White and Salwyn Schapiro, *The Emer- of Liberal Humanism* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company,). 7.

preoccupation with the objective—the external world and its ruling powers, the gods and the goddesses, the Purusha, Prajāpati Viśvakarmā or Hiranyagarbha—which was characteristic of the Vedas and the Brāhmanas. Voicing this subjective bias, the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka* I.I.4.5) recommends: 'The Ātman alone is to be seen, to be heard and thought about and meditated upon'. As we shall gradually be led to see, this shift in interest from gods and goddesses, and a Cause or Creator more or less external to or different from the individual worshipper, was correlated with growing indifference towards material goods and comforts and increasing absorption in the quest of personal salvation. Having somehow arrived at the belief in an immortal Self or Ātman, the quest in question became inseparably connected with the problem of the nature of that Self. Maybe the sense of disillusionment with respect to material goods and worldly prosperity was generated by a vivid realisation of the reality of death or the transient character of earthly triumphs and enjoyments, maybe the mind of the intellectual elite of the times was suddenly seized with a longing for the higher and greater conquest of immortality itself. The story of Nachiketas seems to attest the prevalence of the former sentiment, while the earlier dialogue between Yājñavalkya and his wife Maitreyī appears to be indicative of the latter aspiration. It may be noted here that the *Kaṭhopanishad* which recounts the story of Nachiketas, must have been composed much later than the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka*, and not much earlier than the time of the Buddha It may be conjectured that the intervening period was characterised by growing aversion towards the practice and the practitioners of the sacrificial cult on the one hand, and increasing disenchantment with earthly life on the other. The realization that the cult of sacrifice cannot lead us to the goal of liberation or the highest fulfilment is also voiced by the *Muṇḍaka Upanishad* in an oft-quoted stanza (1 2.7) which characterizes the sacrifices as frail boats. 'Fools they are', it goes on to declare, 'who call these the highest good; again and again they fall into the clutches of old age and death'.

We shall now proceed to summarise in brief the Upanishadic view of Self. Here it may be remembered that the Upanishads, being works of different authors, do not all hold identical views about the self and Brahman or Godhead. The āchāryas, who inter-

preted Upanishadic philosophy, also differed among themselves as to the overall structure and import of that philosophy. However, our one main concern here is to highlight the views that have been historically influential.

1. The Upanishadic teachers, as also their various interpreters, are agreed that the soul or self (Ātman) is both unborn and imperishable. Among the commentators only Śaṅkara upholds the theory of the oneness (*Advaita*) of the individual soul with Brahman. According to him the plurality of the individual selves is an appearance due to *avidyā* or nescience. That appearance is comparable to the multiplicity of the sun-images due to the reflection of the sun in volumes of water confined within different reservoirs. Other interpreters are able to find texts which distinguish between individual soul and Brahman; these interpreters include such illustrious philosopher-teachers as Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbārka and others. But while committing themselves to the doctrine of the plurality of the souls they all agree in believing them to be *unborn* and *immortal* The souls differ from God or Brahman in several important respects, but they resemble him in being eternal and immortal entities.

2. All Vedāntic āchāryas (i e., the philosopher-teachers who base their doctrines on the Upanishads, the *Bhagavadgītā*, and the *Brahma Sūtras*, the so-called triple texts or *Prasthānatrayī*) believe in the law of *Karma* and the theory of transmigration of the soul from one form of life to another in accordance with its moral deserts. These related theses are clearly enunciated in the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* (V 10 7), in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* (III 2.13), in the *Kaṭhopanishad* (Vallī V.7), etc.

3 All Vedāntic āchāryas agree in declaring the highest goal of life to be liberation or *Mukti* from the round of births and deaths. The souls' association with one body or another, brought about by its moral deserts, constitutes *saṁsāra*, *moksha* or liberation consists in the transcendence of this *saṁsāra*.

4. The Doctrine of *Mukti* or Salvation: The more important Upanishads draw a distinction between *Preya* and *Śreya*, worldly rosperity and the highest good consisting in liberation or *mukti* om *samsāra*: An important aspect of this distinction is connected with their peculiar view of the essential nature of the self or Ātman. Thus, in the *Chhāndogya Up.* (VII.7.1), the god Prajāpati,

desiring to stress the need of knowing Ātman, characterizes it thus: 'That Ātman which is devoid of sorrow, without hunger and thirst', etc. At another place (VIII.12.1) the same Upanishad expresses the view that, so long as the soul is associated with the body, it cannot be free from pleasure and pain; on the contrary, once it is rid of the body, it is no more touched by pleasure and pain (literally the agreeable and the disagreeable). In a similar vein, the *Kaṭhopanishad* (Vallī V.11) declares: 'Just as the sun, the eye of the world, is not touched by the defects of the visible objects, similarly the single, inner soul of all is not touched by the miseries of the world'. The conclusion is that the soul or Ātman is pure in essence, subject neither to sin nor suffering. How is it, then, that it comes to be associated with the body and with pleasures and pains of embodied existence? The Upanishads maintain that the bondage of the soul consisting in the aforesaid associations is due to ignorance—the ignorance of its own essential nature. As a corollary from this doctrine, if follows that the soul can liberate itself by the acquisition of right knowledge. The attainment of such knowledge is indistinguishable from self-realization—or rather, self-realization which is also *mukti* or liberation, is more or less the immediate consequence of true self-knowledge

We may now indicate the humanistic implications of the Upanishadic view of the soul or self.

1. The individual soul, according to the Upanishads, is unborn and immortal. While the several āchāryas, who claim to interpret the true Upanishadic doctrine, differ as to whether the self is to be identified with Brahman or not, they all agree in regarding it as an eternal entity. All the selves or souls are believed to be co-eternal with God or Brahman. Even those who distinguish the individual souls from God, do not consider him to be the creator of them; nor can God destroy the souls as the latter are essentially non-composite, indestructible entities In other words, *the souls owe neither their being nor their continued existence to God.* However, God has jurisdiction over the souls in the sense that He is responsible for their association with lower or higher organisms in different births, depending on the accumulated stock of moral merit and demerit in each particular case. The conception of the soul as an imperishable, eternal entity obviously involves its ontological independence. This notion of the soul may be contrasted with

that propagated by Judaism, Christianity and Islam. All these religions consider the soul to be a created entity deriving its being from God, they also believe that the continued existence of the soul depends on the sweet will of God who can destroy it if he so wills or desires. Needless to say the Advaita Vedānta, which identifies the soul with Brahman, declares it to be the highest principle in the universe.

2 The law of *Karma* stresses the fact of the soul's independence of God in another direction. God cannot punish or penalise the soul without reference to its moral past. God, in fact, acts more or less as a catalytic agent, that brings about the fruition of the good and evil doings of the soul itself. God cannot interfere with the working of the law of *Karma*; he can only, so to say, facilitate its operation Nor can it be said that that law in any way depends on God. In fact, according to Hindu mythology, even the gods are subject to the inexorable law of *Karma*. It may be noted here that in the *Purānas* or the sacred mythological literature of the Hindus, the saints and sages, who have earned spiritual merit through the practice of Yoga or austerities, are considered to be more potent beings than even the gods. A sage or seer, when under provocation and angry, may curse and condemn even a god to birth on a lower plane of existence Indeed, there are stories relating how the great god Vishṇu himself had to suffer birth on earth and to undergo various trials and travails as a human being under the curse of one or other sage. This means that even the highest God of the Hindus is subject to the law of *Karma*. Seeing that the law of *Karma* is supreme, the heretical creeds of Jainism and Buddhism find it unnecessary to postulate God for the operation of that law. That law makes the soul's destiny largely independent of God even for the believers; it leads to the downright rejection of God by the atheistic creeds and philosophies. Among these latter are included, in addition to Jainism and Buddhism, the philosophical schools of Pūrva Mīmāmsā and Sāṅkhya. Curiously enough these schools are regarded as orthodox systems of thought falling within the jurisdiction of Hindu thought and culture.

3 These Hindu Schools of thought are taken to be orthodox for the reason that they subscribe to the authority of the Vedas. The Mīmāmsā School which marks the continuation of the sacri-

ficial cult of the Brāhmaṇas, is characterized by rigid adherence to the Veda or the Vedas whose special function, according to it, is the issuing of injunctions and prohibitions, with a view to making known *Dharma* (fundamental morality) and *Adharma* (Vice or moral evil) to mankind. The Mīmāṁsakas maintain that men could not have learnt about what is moral or desirable course of action and what is immoral without the revealed scriptures called the Vedas. Curiously enough the Mīmāṁsakas do not ascribe the authorship of the Vedas to God. The Vedas, in their view, are eternal word whose authorship is inconceivable. Furthermore, the Mīmāṁsakas refuse to subscribe to the dogmas of the creation and dissolution of the world, which enables them to dispense with the concept of a creator of the world The rejection of a creator of the world accords well with their denial of the authorship of the Veda The Sāṅkhya philosophy claims to derive from the Veda. However, the authors or exponents of this philosophy maintain that the Upanishadic references to the spiritual principle all apply to *Purusha* or the individual soul. References to Brahman or Īśvara are actually intended to be descriptions of the liberated soul or *Purusha*

4. It is noteworthy that both the heretical creeds of Jainism and Buddhism and the atheistic philosophies of Sānkhya-Yoga and even the Pūrva Mīmāmsā subscribe to belief in the ultimate salvation, liberation or *mukti*, of the soul or *Purusha*. (Buddhism, however, does not believe in any eternal entity like the soul; nevertheless, it believes in the ultimate goal of *mukti* or *nirvāna*. Their highly complicated view about *Nirvāna* will be discussed in the next chapter).

Practically all the classical systems of Indian philosophy, orthodox and heterodox, are inclined to equate liberation with self-realisation. The liberated soul does not attain to a state of being foreign to its own nature; nor does liberation consist in the attainment of union or association with a higher being or a place in another sphere of existence. According to the Upanishads the state of liberation is a permanent or everlasting achievement. Once liberated through knowledge and related spiritual discipline the soul, declares the *Chhāndogya Up.*, never falls back into the state of bondage. On the basis of this Śaṅkara argues: if the state of *mukti* or fulfilment consisted in the gaining or winning by the self of

some sort of excellence or perfection foreign to it, then that state would not be a permanent or enduring acquistion. For anything acquired by a being is likely to be taken away or dissociated from it at a future moment. The state of liberation can be abiding and permanent only if it constitutes the soul's essential nature From these considerations, it also seems to follow that the bondage of the soul can only be an appearance For if bondage were a real rather than an apparent adjunct or attribute of the soul, the latter could not possibly get rid of the former. (Here it is assumed that no being can dispossess itself of what belongs to its essential nature). The Upanishads, and following them, the philosophies of liberation propounded by different schools, also maintain that liberation can be won through knowledge. Here Śaṅkara argues. Knowledge can demolish or destroy only what is presented by *avidyā* or nescience—knowledge can eradicate bondage only if the latter is in some sense unreal or illusory. For instance, the realization or knowledge that something is a rope demolishes the snake for which the rope has been mistaken.[1]

The conclusion is that *mukti* or liberation consists in the realization by the soul of its own pristine purity or essential perfection. This perfection and purity is variously conceived by different Hindu systems. The more important of these, i.e. the Sānkhya (-Yoga) and the Advaita Vedānta, consistently uphold and develop the view that the bondage of the soul or Ātman is an illusion which is dissipated by true spiritual knowledge. However, the Nyāya-Vaiśeshika systems do not consider bondage to be illusory; nevertheless, they too stress the importance of knowledge for the attainment of liberation The Nyāya system (as also the Vaiśeshika system) is committed to belief in a creator God. But it is intriguing, and interesting from the humanistic viewpoint, to note that even according to these systems the soul's liberation does not consist in its association with the Godhead The Advaita Vedānta, of course, does not draw any distinction between Ātman and Brahman. The Sānkhya system has no place for God distinguishable from the Purusha. Significantly, it describes the state of liberation as Kaivalya which may be translated as Aloofness; the

[1]For a detailed account of Śankara's views see N.K. Devaraja, *An Introduction to Śaṅkara's Theory of Knowledge* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972), Chapter II.

term is intended to underline the fact that the Purusha is completely dissociated from *Prakṛiti*, i.e. the physical universe, in the state of liberation. The Sānkhya believes in plurality or rather multiplicity of the Purushas; when liberated, they remain wholly dissociated from one another as well

Above we have described the views of the classical systems of Hindu philosophy. The Jaina view of *mukti* of liberation substantially resembles the aforesaid theories with one important difference. Discarding the dogmas of the creation and dissolution of the world and the related doctrine of a creator God, the Jainas maintain that the liberated soul itself attains omniscience and omnipotence in relation to the physical world. These classical theories of liberation undergo significant modification in the hands of later theistic philosophers beginning with Rāmānuja who flourished in the eleventh century. While still advocating the need of right philosophical views for the attainment of *mukti,* they yet laid greater emphasis on *Bhakti* or devotion as the means *par excellence* for reaching the goal. In the preeminently theistic systems propounded by these thinkers the position of God, the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the world, is exalted far above his creatures, and the status of the individual soul is correspondingly depressed.

5. Another important aspect of the Upanishadic view, which finds fuller development at the hands of later philosophers, is belief in the possibility of liberation-in-life. The sage who has attained the highest knowledge and has, through that knowledge, conquered attachment, aversion and the like—the passions that defile the mind and disturb its peace—enjoys the tranquillity and bliss of liberation while still living here on earth. To the question, 'How is it that the acquisition of saving knowledge by the sage does not at once lead to the dissolution of his body?' a reply is attempted in terms of the *Karma* theory The operation of the law of *Karma* is bound up with the illusion of agenthood harboured by men Knowledge leads to the dissolution and the disappearance of the sense of being the doer and the enjoyer which lies at the root of the emergence of bondage—rather, which constitutes the bondage. Since knowledge eradicates the illusion of agenthood, its attainment should be followed by the destruction of *Karma* and its fruits, resulting in the disintegration and des-

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truction of the psycho-physical organism or the *appearance* of the soul's association with it. The reason is that while knowledge may lead to the destruction of the accumulated results of *Karma*, it cannot at once put a stop to the operation of those past actions that have already started bearing fruits. These are technically known as *Prārabdha Karma.* The situation is illustrated by reference to the potter's wheel which continues to revolve for a while even after the potter has withdrawn his hand from it. As for the proof that a person has achieved liberation while still living his earthly life, it is stated that the sole evidence consists in the observable peace and tranquillity that characterize his life. It may be mentioned here that the doctrine of *Jīvanmukti*, in one form or other, is accepted by most of the classical philosophers including the Jaina and the Buddhist thinkers. Here again the later *bhakta* philosophers headed by Rāmānuja refuse to believe in the possibility of the above type of liberation.

The humanistic implications of the doctrine of *Jīvanmukti* are obvious. The highest perfection or fulfilment of which man is capable can be attained and enjoyed by him here in his earthly existence. Maybe the concept of perfection built up by the classical Indian philosophers will not be acceptable in its traditional garb to the modern humanist, but even this need not imply that their conception of the state of *mukti* or perfection is altogether irrelevant for us. For our purpose the significant point to be noted is that the fulfilment of human life need not involve total rejection and transcendence of earthly existence. This fact needs emphasizing because the spokesmen of such theistic creeds as Vaishnavism, Christianity and Islam are inclined to discount the possibility of the highest fulfilment of man's life within the spatio-temporal order.

The humanistic side of Upanishadic metaphysics finds clearest expression in Śaṅkara and his followers. All the main themes of the ancient Upanishads, metaphysical and religious—the two going hand in hand in the discourses of the Upanishadic sages—are fully developed by Śaṅkara in his celebrated commentaries His main contribution to the metaphysical speculations scattered in the Upanishadic texts, particularly those expressing the advaitic or non-dualistic bias, consists in providing logical basis and cohesion to them The advaitic metaphysics, as elaborated in Śankara's

commentaries, rests upon but few assumptions or postulates. Probably no other Indian system of philosophy proceeds on the basis of so few central conceptions These conceptions, definitions or assumptions have, for those belonging to the orthodox fold of Hinduism, the additional merit of deriving directly from the texts of the oldest Upanishads. Thus the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* unambiguously declares: 'Dear one, *Sat* or Being alone existed in the beginning one without a second'. Elsewhere we are told that 'from death to death he goes who sees plurality here' (*Bṛihad. Up*. IV.4.10). 'Thou art that' (*Chhānd. Up*. VI.8.7), 'This *Ātman* is *Brahman*' (*Bṛihad. Up*. II 5.19) are utterances known even to the elementary students of the Advaita Vedānta. Śaṅkara succeeds not only in welding into systematic unity these and similar statements in his metaphysical scheme, but also in deducing from them a theory of liberation unique of its kind. Because Brahman or Ātman is the only reality one without a second, the world revealed to us through the senses must be an appearance (*Mithyā*), which can be described neither as real nor as unreal To the question 'Can the existence of Brahman which the scripture proclaims to be the Cause or Ground of the universe be proved or established through the *Pramāṇas*?' Śaṅkara's reply is ambiguous. In the first place, he points out that the fact of Brahman's being the cause of the world can be known only from the scripture. He also asserts that, being invisible to the senses and without a visible mark (*hetu*), Brahman is not accessible either to perception or to inference. The existence or reality of Brahman can be known only from the scripture. (This point is emphasized by Śankara in his controversy with the Mīmāṁsakas who insist that the Vedas are not concerned to delineate the character of the existents, there being other *pramāṇas* to do the job). It may be noted here that Rāmānuja, the second most important exponent of the Vedāntic texts, agrees with Śankara in placing Brahman beyond the reach of the *pramānas* other than the scripture But Śankara does not stop with the negative pronouncements made by him in a polemical mood. Having exposed the weakness of the contention that the scripture does not purport to teach about any existent such as Brahman, Śaṅkara proceeds to emphasize the self-luminous (*Svaprakāśa*) character of the Ātman. The *Bṛihadāranyaka* poses the puzzling question: 'By what means can the knower him-

self be known?' With that text in his mind Śaṅkara declares: the Self or Ātman that uses the *Pramāṇas* to know things external to self is self-luminous (*svayaṁprakāśa*) and self-proved (*svayaṁsiddha*). This doctrine of the self-luminosity of the self is the cornerstone of Advaitic metaphysics; it is commented upon and elaborated by some of the greatest scholar-thinkers of the Advaita school. From our viewpoint the important thing to note is that, having established the existence or reality of Ātman by aforesaid considerations (which amount more or less to the transcendental proof in the Kantian system), and having identified Ātman with Brahman, Śaṅkara does not feel called upon, as a philosopher or metaphysician, to advance other proof or consideration for establishing the existence of Brahman, the supposed Ground or First Cause of the cosmos. Brahman, the supreme spiritual principle, is given here and now in the immediacy of the Self's awareness of its own luminous being Brahman is accessible to us in our own being or self, if that were not so, there will be no valid reason for affirming or postulating its existence. Thus, metaphysically speaking, Brahman can be reached only through the Ātman. If Brahman were considered to be different from man's own self, then there would be no possibility of knowing him or it. Viewed in this light the Vedāntic approach to the ultimate real is radically different from that of other religions.

This leads us to notice another important feature of the Śaṅkarite doctrine of self-knowledge and the self's salvation. According to Advaitic metaphysics the entire panorama of phenomenal existence belongs to the realm of *Māyā*, the principle of cosmic illusion. From this it follows that the so-called *pramāṇas*, perception, inference, etc., *as also the scriptures* belong to the phenomenal order. As such, they cannot be the proper vehicles of the knowledge of the real, viz. the Ātman. Ātman, therefore, is taken, as already stated, to be beyond the reach of the *pramāṇas*. Thus, at one stroke, Śankara seems to demolish the authority of the scriptures. As a matter of fact, Śaṅkara concedes to the scriptures a secondary role in the production of self-knowledge. His final view may be stated thus: the role of the *pramāṇas* including the scriptures is limited to removing the veil of ignorance or *avidyā*. To quote Śankara's actual words. 'The scripture does not aim at expounding the nature of Brahman as an object whose essence

may be indicated as "this and this"; it can only explicate its nature as a non-object constituting the luminous selfhood thereby effecting the dissolution of the distinctions between the object of knowledge, the subject of knowledge and the process or activity of knowledge.'[1] The statement has two significant implications. First, the scripture can lead us to self-knowledge only indirectly, by removing the obstacles to self's awareness of its true essence. Second, had the real not been identical with the self or Ātman the scripture would have been powerless to be an aid in its cognition. In an earlier passage (SB I.1 1) Śaṅkara makes the following meaningful statement: 'The desire to know Brahman has for its object the cognition that finds fruition in direct awareness (of self)'. This sort of awareness cannot, obviously, be communicated by the scriptures. This means that there are definite limits to the authority of the scriptures. This is clearly brought out in a verse (II.46) of the *Bhagavadgītā* and Śankara's commentary on it. The verse says: 'For the person who knows or has awareness of Brahman, the Vedas have only that much use as has a well (literally, a small reservoir of water) for the person surrounded on all sides by flooding waters.' The Indian tradition as a whole attaches greater importance to direct experience (*sākshātkāra*) or the self-realization than to the study of the scriptures and philosophical systems and the knowledge gained from them. This also explains why the tradition should attach the utmost importance to the Guru or the spiritual teacher. Needless to say only the man of self-realization qualifies to be a Guru or teacher in the true sense. This may also account for the fact that, while paying lip-homage to the authority of the scriptures—rather, not questioning that authority openly—quite a few among even the so-called orthodox Hindu philosophers, e.g. Gautama, Kaṇāda and Kapila, develop their philosophical concepts almost wholly without reference to scriptural texts. Similar remarks apply to such founders of new religious sects, some of whom were either near-illiterate or not highly versed in philosophic literature, as Kabir, Dadu Dayal, Raidas, Guru Nanak and the like In our own times Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, a towering figure among the saintly teachers of humanity, was not

[1]*Śaṅkara's Bhāshya*, 1.1.4.

noted for scholarship and learning, having derived his knowledge or perception of Vedāntic truths either from the word of the mouth or from his own spiritual experience.

We may refer in passing to one more consequence of the central assumptions of Śankara's Vedānta. Since liberation is nothing different from the self's own imperishable essence, it cannot be the effect of a process, or the result of an action or a course of action It follows that liberation cannot be brought about by actions however meritorious. This is not to say that ethical activity or morally meritorious deeds are altogether useless or irrelevant for the progress towards spiritual fulfilment Moral action consisting in the proper discharge of one's obligations and in the exercise of compassion, serves to purify one's *chitta* or mind; such mind alone is fit to receive the illumination of spiritual insight or saving knowledge. Śaṅkara, indeed, lays down strict conditions for the person who would qualify to study Vedānta presumably under a wise and saintly Guru. Such a person should already have the ability to discriminate between the enduring and the transient, should be indifferent and detached towards the enjoyments of this world and the next (i e. *svarga* or heaven of popular conception), should have control over the mind and the senses, and should be possessed by passionate longing for liberation. These qualities of mind and character, it may be noted, are, according to Śaṅkara, the *prerequisites* of the study of the Vedānta. Only the person who has already done a good deal of thinking about the ephemeral character of worldly triumphs and has developed a fair measure of disillusioned detachment towards earthly possessions may undertake the momentous inquiry into the nature of Brahman or the self. Like Aristotle, Śaṅkara seems to exalt the life of contemplation over that of action, but the sort of contemplation envisaged by him is closely allied to meditation.

VEDĀNTA IN MODERN INDIAN THOUGHT

Hindu thought and culture received a temporary setback during the Middle Ages when Islamic conquerers established their rule over considerable areas in the Indian subcontinent. Hinduism sought to recover from the cultural shock delivered by Islam by re-interpreting its Vedāntic heritage along theistic lines. While

Hinduism as religion did not yield much ground to Islam, the Hindu nation, having imbibed the gospel of dependence on God at the hands of their philosophers and saints, gradually lost touch with the political acumen and sagacity of the times of the *Arthaśāstra*. According to Kālidāsa the illustrious rulers of the solar dynasty cultivated both the Śāstras (i.e. the sciences or organised branches of knowledge) and the martial arts. The king Dilīpa was adept in both and depended mainly on these for gaining his ends. (*Raghuvaṁśa*, 1.19). It is doubtful if the majority of the Hindu rulers of medieval India, who now and then organised resistance against the Muslim kings and emperors, had good acquaintance with even the manuals of diplomacy produced in Sanskrit. (I am not sure if these manuals were ever translated into vernacular languages spoken in medieval India) The philosophers of *Bhakti* particularly those coming after Rāmānuja, it may be noted, did not make any significant contributions, comparable to those of the great Hindu and Buddhist logicians of the classical age, to theory of knowledge or the theory of reasoning. Not that there is dearth of dialectical acumen and the debating temper in post-Rāmānuja philosophical writings, but the gifts do not serve any constructive purpose Similar remarks apply to that amazing creation of the medieval Indian mind, the *Navya-Nyāya*. However, even these achievements were made possible by the settled conditions, political and social, produced by several centuries of Moghul rule in the country. Among the Moghul rulers, Akbar probably was gifted with a truly powerful mind, he was also liberal in matters relating to religious belief and practice. Unfortunately, he did not have any direct acquaintance with the so-called Śāstras, commensurate with his military and administrative genius

Philosophy apart, the failure of the Hindu mind is seem mainly in their social and, of course, political thinking. Blissfully unaware of all canons of diplomacy, Rana Pratap, the tallest among the Rajput heroes, quarrelled with Man Singh on the flimsy, rather sentimental issue that the latter had married his sister to Akbar. Quarrels and bickerings over petty matters spoil the otherwise heroic annals of the great Rajput rulers and warriors.

On the eve of Muslim conquests, according to the eminent historian K.M Panikkar, manifold deterioration had set in the

Indian Hindu society. The sense of patriotism and national honour had gradually weakened after the disintegration of Harsha's empire, and people had grown parochial in outlook. Consuming arrogance and the absence of the desire to grow in knowledge and understanding, and of the ambition to cultivate the arts and sciences conducive to greatness of mind and effective management of affairs affecting collective life, marked the inhabitants and rulers of small kingdoms. Says Panikkar:

> Completely insular in ideas, without any knowledge of what was happening in the rest of the world, the Indian people ceased to grow. Civilization became decadent and inbred for lack of fertilizing contacts with dissimilar cultures. Society became static and the systematizations of previous ages which were more academic than real at the time of their conception like chaturvarna—the four castes—and food and drink taboos came to be accepted as divine regulations and conformed to with a rigidity which would have surprised Manu and Yājnavalkya.[1]

Conditions in India were no better after the disintegration of the vast Moghul empire and its aftermath. In those times literature and other arts and sciences could flourish only under the patronage of enlightened kings or rulers. Such conditions of patronage had been provided by the Moghul emperors and by some Maratha rulers. However, both the Marathas and the descendants of the last Moghul emperor, Aurangzeb, and other Muslim rulers had exhausted themselves in mutual wars. Not only that, the Marathas had fought against one another and so had the Muslim rulers of the north and the south. By the time the East India Company established its rule over parts of India both the Marathas and Mohammedan Nawabs had exhausted their resources, economic and military, and the nation as a whole had become demoralized. The Hindu society in particular was beset with superstitions and evils of various kinds, e g sati, untouchability, intolerant caste-distinctions and taboos of various kinds. The conquests of the British encouraged Christian missionaries to carry on systematic propaganda against religion and culture of the Indians, particularly the Hindus, and to convert them to their own creed. At this

[1]*A Survey of Indian History* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, reprinted 1960), p. 106.

juncture in her cultural history, India produced a number of illustrious scholar-reformers who sought to give a new orientation to socio-religious thought and institutions of the people. Foremost among these was Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), a versatile scholar who knew several languages including Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit. Initially, he had been an admirer of Christianity, and had published two important books, *The Precepts of Jesus* and *The Ideal Humanity of Jesus,* containing sympathetic exposition of the Christian religion. However, the overbearing and aggressive attitude of the Christian missionary preachers towards Hinduism and their unscrupulous methods of securing conversions from the ranks of the poor and the semi-literate, led him into conflict with them and transformed him into a powerful spokesman and advocate of ancient Indian religion and culture.

On the other side, he was very keen to reform Hindu society and, with the cooperation of fellow intellectuals, successfully persuaded the government to put legal ban on sati; he also fought for the establishment of educational institutions of the modern type, which might enable the Indian people to acquire knowledge of modern science and technology. In 1828, Ram Mohan Roy established the Brahma Samaj which was destined to grow into a powerful religious movement, particularly in Bengal, during the subsequent decades, Like Dayananda Saraswati (1824-83), the reputed controversialist who founded the Arya-Samaj at a later stage, the teachers and followers of the Brahma Samaj committed themselves to belief in an impersonal Upanishadic Brahman or God, repudiated the doctrine of incarnations of God and condemned idol-worship and caste-distinctions (based on birth). In retrospect it appears that, while actuated by the patriotic motive of defending Indian cultural tradition in general and Vedic Hinduism in particular, the leaders of the Brahma Samaj had been greatly influenced by theistic Christianity Intellectually and emotionally they did not find it possible to accept the advaitic interpretation of the Upanishads, and some of them, e.g. Debendra Nath Tagore (1817-1905), found such Upanishadic utterances as *Tat Twam asi* embarrassing and unpalatable. Among subsequent leaders of the Brahma Samaj the most important were Debendra Nath Tagore and Keshub Chander Sen (or Keshab Chandra Sen) (1838-1884), Regarding the religious and doctrinal attitudes of the three important leaders of

the Brahma Samaj Dr. V.S. Narvane writes: '. . . while the dominant influence on Ram Mohan was that of Islam, and while Debendra Nath's ideas were determined mainly by Upanishadic Hinduism, with Keshab Christianity seems to have been the decisive influence during the most important years of his career as a Brahmo leader.'[1] At one stage Keshab Chandra Sen had started describing himself as Jesudas, i.e. the servant of Jesus. Dr. Narvane records the following statement of his: 'who rules India, not politics or diplomacy, but Christ. None but Jesus ever deserved this bright, precious diadem—India. And Jesus shall have it'.[2]

The nineteenth century, particularly its later half, is generally believed to be the period of the Renaissance of Hinduism. Undoubtedly, a measure of credit for ushering in that Renaissance should be given to the aforesaid founders and leaders of the Brahma Samaj. In northern India, Dayananda Saraswati and the Arya Samaj he founded in 1875 played a significant part in awakening the Hindus to the importance of their religious heritage. Dayananda seems to have been influenced by Islamic monotheism—though, in his *Satyārtha Prakāśa*, he levelled vehement, occasionally acrimonious criticisms against both Christianity and Islam. (But he also directed his weapons of ironical comment and ridicule against Purāṇic Hinduism wedded to idolatry and the worship of Incarnations of Vishṇu and several other gods). These reformers and teachers generated among the Hindus the feeling that their own religion was in no way inferior to Christianity. The militant spokesmen of the Arya Samaj, most of whom had but superficial acquaintance with Western thought and culture and were not noted for their scholarship of classical Indian philosophy, honestly thought that their religion, i.e. Vedic Hinduism as interpreted by them, was superior to both Christianity and Islam. But their interpretation of the Vedas did not carry conviction with modern scholars, Western and Eastern, nor could the tenets of their religion claim any marked superiority to those of Christianity or Islam from which they did not seem to differ materially. So far as the Brahma Samajists were concerned they did not conceal their admiration for Christianity, to Ram Mohan Roy, the only objectionable part in the Christian doctrine was the belief in Christ's sonship

[1]*Modern Indian Thought* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, reprinted 1967), p. 43.
[2]Loc. cit.

of God. If anything Keshab Chandra Sen was a still greater admirer of Christianity and, as we have already mentioned, Debendra Nath Tagore did not endorse the advaitic strain in some of the Upanishads.

We are not suggesting that the advaitic metaphysics and religion are necessarily superior to the theistic world-view, nor denying that theistic religion had been as popular in India, particularly with the masses, as anywhere else. The point that we want to stress is that emphasis on theistic Vedânta could not have served to differentiate even revived Hinduism from Christianity, the creed of the ruling race, which constituted a threat to the religion of the majority of the Indian people.

It was the emergence of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa (1834-86), one of the greatest saints that Hinduism, and the world, has produced, as a powerful exponent and an influential teacher of Vedântic religion, that effectively checked the mounting pressure of Christian propaganda and posed a challenge to Christianity's claim to be a superior religion. Ramakrishna was indeed too simple and unassuming a soul to quarrel with Christian missionaries or take cudgels on behalf of Hinduism. But his very innocence and simplicity, coupled with absolute purity of character and piety of the highest kind, attracted the attention of discerning men and women engaged in religious quest. Fortunately for him, and for the religion and culture he represented, he was joined at a later stage by a highly intelligent and gifted disciple Narendra Nath Dutta who was destined to carry his message far and near under the name of Swami Vivekananda (1862-1902).

We are not concerned here to recount in detail the fame and success achieved by Vivekananda as a missionary of Vedântic Hinduism. He had an unusually keen intellect and a dynamic personality. He preached Vedânta with unshakable conviction and missionary zeal. As an interpreter of Vedântic Hinduism, Vivekananda has had few equals in modern times; he certainly has no rival in this field among his contemporaries. Looking in retrospect, the intensity and firmness of the Swami's faith in Vedântic metaphysics and religion and his excessive self-confidence as its exponent and propagandist appear to be rather naive and amateurish. One feels that only those writers and thinkers who have luckily or

unluckily been spared the trouble to grapple seriously with problems relating to the formulation and validation of hypotheses or theories—and most of religious teachers and thinkers belong to this category—can command such strong faith and overbearing self-confidence as we find in missionary teachers and propagandists like Vivekananda.

As stated earlier Vivekananda had a powerful intellect, he also was a rationalist of a sort. He had been almost a sceptic or an agnostic as a young man; it was his intimate contact with Ramakrishna that transformed him into a religious person with absolute faith in the philosophy of Advaita. In addition, he had the intelligence and perception to lay his fingers on those strong points in the Vedāntic doctrine that had relevance and meaning for the enlightened minds of his time. We shall briefly indicate here those aspects of the Vedāntic and the Hindu religious tradition which, following his Master, he singled out for emphasis and which have significance from the humanistic standpoint.

Vivekananda was a rationalist. According to Dr. Narvane, he was 'the pioneer of the rationalist movement in modern India in the spheres of philosophy and religion.'[1] However, we should be clear as to the sense in which the Swami may be called a rationalist. In the first place, while he had sufficient regard for the Vedas and the Ūpanishads, he did not swear by them. We have already seen that the Vedānta of Śaṅkara attaches greater value to the 'experience' of the realized soul, which in fact is the ultimate goal of spiritual discipline and also the highest authority for the aspirant who should therefore depend more on the Guru for enlightenment than on the scriptures. Following this tradition Vivekananda observes:

> "I reject the Vedas" is the last word of the Vedānta philosophy. Rituals, hymns, and scriptures through which a man has travelled to freedom vanish for him "So 'ham, So 'ham"— I am He, I am He—bursts forth from his lips, and for him to say "thou" to God is blasphemy, for he is "One with Father,"[2]

[1]Ibid., p 94.
[2]*The Message of Our Master* (Almora: Advaita Ashram, 1936), "The Essence of Religion", p. 10.

'Personally,' he proceeds to say, 'I take as much of the Vedas as agrees with reason. Parts of the Vedas are apparently contradictory' Elsewhere he openly exhorts people to use reason even in religious inquiries He says: 'I am sure God will pardon a man who will use his reason and cannot believe, rather than a man who believes blindly .. we must reason; and when reason prove to us the truth of these prophets and great men about whom the ancient books speak in every country, we shall believe in them.'[1] While praising Buddha in *Karma Yoga*, the remarks:

> "He is the first great reformer the world has seen. He was the first who dared to say, "Believe not because some old manuscripts are produced, believe not because it is your national belief, because you are made to believe it from your childhood; but reason it all out ... then if you find that it will do good to one and all, believe it, live upto it and help others to live up to it."[2]

Elsewhere he makes the point that one can judge between the conflicting claims and teachings of two or more prophets or religions only by rational considerations. In this connection he makes a very significant observation: 'the proof of religion depends on the truth of the constitution of man, and not on any books."[3]

It may be remembered here that in ancient India if two Āchāryas differed in their interpretation of a scriptural text or its import, one argument advanced by one or each of them in support of his interpretation would be that the view embodied in the rival interpretation failed to satisfy reason. It may be noted also that Vivekananda was not a rationalist in the Cartesian sense; indeed, he attached all the importance to intuitive experience of the self.

Another important point in Vivekananda's interpretation of Vedānta, which again is very much in line with the tradition, is his emphasis on the dignity of man. Brahman or Godhead being identical with man's essential self, God is to be sought within one's own self While addressing the Parliament of Religions in September 1893 Vivekananda quoted the Upanishadic description of men

[1]Quoted in *Vivekananda, His Call to the Nation* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1976), p 43.
[2]*Complete Works*, Vol I (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1965), p. 117.
[3]Ibid., "Reason and Religion", p. 369.

as "children of immortal bliss" (*amṛitasya putrāh*). He then proceeded to say· 'Ye are the Children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth-sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature'.[1] He then refers to the familiar Vedāntic parable in which a lion-cub, brought up with sheep, and behaving like them, is reminded by somebody that he is a lion.

In addition to being a great scholar-thinker and a sannyāsin with missionary zeal Vivekananda was a great patriot who felt deeply concerned over the conditions of the Indian people. He was an admirer not only of Śankara, one of the giant intellects produced by India, but also of the compassionate Buddha. The gospel of selfless action (*nishkāma karma*), as formulated in the *Bhagavadgītā,* had irresistible appeal to him. Under these influences the Swami preached the gospel of service to the weak and the needy. Through such service alone could the Vedānta be translated into practice, i.e. become practical Vedānta, which was a prime need of India at the time. He observes:

> *That society is the greatest, where the highest truths become practical* . . . and if society is not fit for the highest truths, make it so, and the sooner the better . . . Karma-yoga, therefore is a system of ethics and religion intended to attain freedom through unselfishness and by good works The karma-yogi need not believe in any doctrine whatever. He may not believe even in God, may not ask what his soul is, not think any metaphysical speculation He has got his own special aim of realising selflessness, and he has to work it out himself. Every movement of his life must be realisation because he has to solve by mere work, without the help of doctrine or theory, the very same problem to which the Jnani applies his reason and inspiration and the Bhakta his love [2]

This is the Swami's practical Vedānta, and this is almost pure humanism. This may also be taken to be his contribution to the Advaitic tradition as understood and interpreted up till his time.

[1]*Complete Works,* Vol. I, p. 11.
[2]*Teachings of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1959), pp. 36, 58.

As we shall see this practical strain in his thought makes him a worthy predecessor of Mahatma Gandhi.

Vivekananda, of course, did not approve of the caste system. He deprecated the tendency of the upper castes to seek and expect privileged treatment In a lecture entitled "Vedanta and Privilege", delivered in London, he expressed his admiration for the Buddha who assailed caste-divisions and attempted 'to break down privilege'. Buddha preached the idea of the equality of all men. 'The difference between the god and the devil', the Swami asserts, 'is in nothing except in unselfishness and selfishness.' Quoting the *Gītā* words according to which the learned look with the same eye upon the cow, the elephant, the dog, or the outcaste he concludes with the following statement: 'Says the Vedanta, we must give up the idea of privilege, then will religion come. Before that there is no religion at all'. And he quotes Christ as saying, "Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and follow me."[1] Here, it seems, is the ground where Vivekananda's practical Vedānta draws inspiration from Christianity. However, the Swami scarcely likes Christianity's emphasis on the truth of its dogmas, and its doctrine of the original sin. Humanism alone, it seems, can provide a meeting-ground in the ethics of service and love to such otherwise divergent creeds as Hinduism and Christianity.

In conclusion it may be added that the advaitic tradition continues to have a large following among the philosophically and religiously inclined intellectuals in modern India. In his brief life time Vivekananda attracted a number of thoughtful disciples from the West. Western thinkers and writers like Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard, Christopher Isherwood, have extended understanding admiration and support to the teachings and programmes of the Ramakrishna Mission, founded by Swami Vivekananda. The Vedāntic doctrine of one consciousness appearing as a plurality of selves on account of its association with a number of bodies has been endorsed by no less a scientist-thinker than Professor Erwin Schrödinger in the final chapter of his book, *What is Life.* Aldous Huxley reports with approval the aforesaid mathematical physicist's view in a paper contributed to *Vedanta for Modern Man*,

[1] *Complete Works*, Vol. I, pp. 425, 428, 429.

edited by Christopher Isherwood[1] Huxley's paper is entitled "William Law." Huxley also thinks that Jesus's precept "to love God with all your heart and soul and strength" could be meaning-ful to man only when the latter partook of the divine nature. Huxley also reports that to William Law, the mystic, *Tat Twam asi* was an axiom, which he nevertheless tried to support with arguments

[1]See *Vedanta for Modern Man* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 196.

CHAPTER 2

Buddhism: A Humanistic Religion

AMONG the great religions of the world, Buddhism probably has a greater claim to be called humanistic than any other religion. While the great Chinese thinkers, Lao-tse and Confucius, have pronounced humanistic leanings, they are not averse to indulging in metaphysical speculations which the Buddha avoided in his teachings. On the other hand, Confucianism may claim to be more purely ethical in its emphasis than Buddhism wherein the goal of *Nirvāṇa* receives as much, if not more, emphasis as virtuous life leading to it.

Gautama, or Gotama, the Buddha (563-483 B.C) is unique among the great founders of religions in more ways than one. He did not claim either to be the message bearer of an omniscient God or to be the vehicle of a revealed scripture; nor did he claim to be an omniscient teacher whose words should be accepted as a matter of faith While not limiting knowledge to sense experience. Buddha was inclined to look upon experience both as the source and as the touchstone of truth. Far from exhorting his hearers to take his words as being divinely inspired and therefore beyond questioning as most of the prophet-teachers known to history have done, he asked them to weigh and test his pronouncements against logic and with reference to actual, lived experience or life. In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, Part Three, there is a *Sutta* recording a conversation or dialogue between the Buddha

and the Kālāmās There, addressing the Kālāmās, Buddha delivered the following advice to them: 'O Kālāmās, do not accept a statement because it is reported, because it has come down as tradition, . . . because it conforms to a scripture, because it seems to agree with logic, because it is nice to hear, or because the speaker responsible for its utterance has an attractive personality, or because the śramaṇa-teacher is worthy of our respect . . . When you yourself, by your own experience realise that a certain utterance or teaching is worthy or conducive to good (*Kuśala*), faultless, acceptable to and admired by the wise, such that behaviour in accordance with it is advantageous and productive of happiness—then alone, O Kālāmās, do you follow it.'[1]

This message or advice is repeated several times in the course of the dialogue. Dr. Radhakrishnan quotes a verse from *Jñānasāra-samuchchaya* where the Buddha says: 'As the wise test gold by burning, cutting and rubbing it (on a piece of touchstone), so are you to accept my words after examining them and not merely out of regard for me '[2]

In his respect and regard for the testimony of experience the Buddha may claim to be a positivist of a sort. Of course, the experience that counts with him is not the same as sense-experience; the happiness and satisfaction of which he speaks are more the qualities of the mind or the psyche than those of the body that may be produced and felt by the activity of the senses.

Not only do the prophet-teachers of the world exhort men and women to have unquestioning faith in their words and pronouncements, they also ask them to depend for their well-being and salvation either on God (or gods) whom they claim to represent or on themselves as intermediaries between God in heaven and the mortals on earth No such exhortation is addressed to his followers by the Buddha. Gautama the Buddha attained enlightenment by his own spiritual effort, and he urges and expects his followers to tread the same path for their spiritual salvation or fulfilment It was through his own, human effort, and not with the aid of some superhuman revelation or a teacher or Guru

[1]*Aṅguttara Nikāya* Hindi Tr. (Calcutta: Mahabodhi Sabha, 1957), p. 196.
[2]The *Dhammapada*, Eng. Tr (Oxford University Press, 1950), Introduction, fn. pp 10-11.

claiming to have communion with an omniscient Deity that the Buddha obtained *Bodhi* or enlightenment; and his entire teaching consists in explaining to people how, by following the special mental and moral discipline discovered by him in the course of his spiritual experiments, they too could progress towards and reach that enlightenment. Furthermore—and this is the third humanistic component of the gospel of the Buddha—the state of enlightenment is taken to be either identical with *Nirvāna*, or as leading directly into it. Again, like the Upanishadic sages, the Buddha believes that the condition of *Nirvāṇa* can be attained and experienced by the aspirant here in his earthly life.

As a matter of fact though Buddhism arose by way of rebellion against some beliefs and practices of Vedic Hinduism, e.g. the cult of sacrifice involving slaughter of animals, hierarchical order of castes, and, of course, belief in a creator God and scriptural authority, it nevertheless had quite a few things in common particularly with Upanishadic teachings Another way of looking at the situation would be to hold that those teachers themselves had been influenced by some older, śramaṇic orders that probably represented the pre-Vedic civilization of the Indus Valley. Two things about the cultural history of ancient India seem to be well-supported by available evidence: first, the Vedic Aryans, initially, had a hostile attitude towards the institutions and practices of the Harappan culture Their ascetic cults with emphasis on the renunciation of the world and their worship of the ascetic god Śiva, whose stone-image had phallus-like appearance, repelled the Aryan people. Gradually, however, some elements of the said culture and its people including their ascetic practices that were later on absorbed in the cult of Yoga, and even their God Śiva and their mother goddess or goddesses, made way into the Vedic and later on Hindu pantheon. There is evidence to show that the fourth āśrama or stage of life, called sannyāsa, did not originally form part of the Hindu scheme of life, and that there was resistance from the priest class to admitting it into the Aryan scheme of life. This might have been done by way of compromise between the extreme cult of ascetic renunciation on the one hand and that of sacrifice propagated by the priestly order on the other. It is noteworthy here that while the majority of Upanishadic teachers were married householders, some of them, e.g Yājñavalkya is shown express-

ing in a matter of fact manner—without indulging in any emotional exposure or denunciation of the vanity of life and its triumphs—the desire to leave the world and enter into *Sannyāsa.* It may also be noted that the great Manu while lauding the ideal of Sannyâsa and the magnanimous and compassionate cosmopolitanism of the sannyâsin, yet insists that a person should enter into *sannyāsa* only after he has passed through the first three stages of life and has discharged the various debts owed to the ṛishis, the ancestors and the gods. However, as Dr. K.N. Upadhyaya observes, Śramaṇic influence had gained considerable ground in the Aryan tradition by the time of the later Upanishads, with the result that life of renunciation came to be especially honoured. This must have happened on account of growing emphasis on the goal of *Moksha* which could be exclusively pursued only by a person not encumbered by worldly cares and responsibilities. Says Prof. Upadhyaya, 'During the late Upanishadic periods, the two traditions had come so close that the erstwhile despised and neglected samans and muṇḍakas had come to occupy a position equal to the Brāhmaṇas, so much so, that one of the Upanishads was called *Muṇḍakopanishad* and the Pali literature placed samanas alongside the Brāhmaṇas '[1] However, at a later stage of Hindu, or Indian culture as a whole, when Śaṅkara's Vedānta that had developed partly under Buddhist influence, came to occupy a prominent place among Hindu systems, the ideal of the world renouncing sannyāsin became a dominating factor in the scholarly and religious circles.

It may be noted here that quite a few important Upanishadic teachers, e g. Janaka, Ajātaśatru, and Pravāhaṇa Jaivali, were prominent Kshatriya rulers. Some of these claimed to be in possession of secret spiritual knowledge unknown to the Brāhmaṇas. A statement to this effect has been made by the last named king as he proceeds to impart his teachings to a Brahmin student. In the *Bhagavadgītā*, Lord Krishna, himself a Kshatriya teacher, avers that the doctrine of Karmayoga had been taught by him earlier to a Kshatriya ruler from whom it had come down to other rulers. Having been forgotten during the course of time,

[1]*Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgita* (Delhi: Motilal Banarasi Dass, 1971), p. 92.

says Krishna, the teaching was revived by him for the benefit of Arjuna. Such statements about spiritually inclined rulers seem to suggest that the śramaṇic ideal of *Moksha*, whatever the time of its origin, was more readily adopted in the non-Brahmin circles chiefly the Kshatriyas. Needless to say Gautama, the most outstanding among the śramaṇa teachers produced by ancient India, was himself a Kshatriya of noble birth.

Though, on the whole, the Buddha was a rebel against priestly culture, he nevertheless shared quite a few ideas with the Upanishads. Among these the more important ones were: belief in the law of *Karma* and the doctrine of reincarnation or rebirth; the notion that a person's next birth is determined by what he most strongly desires and cherishes at the time of death; faith in the goal of emancipation or liberation that involves transcendence of *saṁsāra*; belief in the efficacy of knowledge as the instrument *par excellence* of the attainment of salvation; emphasis on internal spiritual discipline as against that on external rites and rituals, accompanied by a disparaging attitude towards the sacrificial cult; the conviction that the state of *Moksha* or *Nirvāṇa* marks the end of spiritual quest and the summit of spiritual attainment from which there is no falling back into the condition of *saṁsāra* which is necessarily fraught with suffering. Regarding the last point it may be added that the Upanishadic teachers do not dwell on the phenomenon of suffering in the manner of the Buddha; what they actually affirm is that the possessions and pleasures of the world, being infected with finitude and transiency, cannot yield abiding satisfaction to man.

We shall discover some other similarities between the Upanishads and the doctrine of the Buddha that are usually ignored by Buddhist scholars. Meanwhile, it must be noted that the Buddha's emphasis on experience—though, we may remember, the experience that counts with the Buddha is not necessarily and even mainly sensory experience—makes him unwilling, even averse, to idle speculation associated with traditional metaphysical way of thought. This leads him to declare some supposedly important philosophical, rather metaphysical, questions to be inept and unanswerable. The well-known four noble truths expounded by the Buddha are simply stated as follows: There is suffering in life, there is the cause of suffering, there is a state or condition of

absence of suffering and there is a way to that state of the cessation of suffering. The way to the end of suffering is the celebrated eightfold path, and the condition of release from suffering is *Nirvāna.* These simple teachings are expounded and elaborated by him on countless occasions before laymen and followers with differing temperaments and varied endowments. (A characteristic yet succinct statement of the Buddha's antimetaphysical bias and his stress on the relevance of his own, pragmatically oriented doctrine may be gathered from a single sutta of the *Majjhima Nikāya* (No. 63)—one of the five Nikāyas).

Here a word may be added about the source books from which authoritative teachings of the Buddha may be gathered Roughly speaking there have been two distinct schools of Buddhist researchers and studies. The older Anglo-German school, headed by T.W. Rhys Davids and H Oldenberg, concentrated almost exclusively on the Pali Canon in their exposition of the Buddha's doctrine. Later on, during the second decade of the twentieth century, some Western scholars headed by the Russian savant Th. Stcherbatsky, started studying the later scholastic literature of Buddhism written in Sanskrit. This led, gradually, to the discovery and intensive exploration of the extensive literature of Mahāyāna Buddhism. According to the representative Sanskrit writers of the Mahāyāna the more important esoteric teachings of the Master—which were intended for intellectually more competent and spiritually more advanced disciples—were enshrined in the *Prajñā Pāramitā Sūtras* Thus, there are today three main classes of Buddhist texts claiming our attention: the Pali *Tripiṭaka*, the extensive Mahāyāna *Sūtras* and the commentaries thereon, and the logico-dialectical and philosophical texts written by such illustrious thinkers as Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Asanga, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Śāntarakshita, etc. It is not possible here for us to enter into the controversy whether the Hīnayāna or the Mahāyāna Schools are the better representatives of the Buddha's gospel, nor is it relevant to our purpose of exploring the humanistic aspects of Buddhism. Nevertheless, it may be added that we cannot wholly ignore the claims of either the Hīnayāna or the Mahāyāna. Nor is it proper for a modern student of Buddhism to ignore the traditional interpretations of the Master's teachings by the several groups or Schools of enthusiastic and learned followers, and adopt

a line of his own. This mistake, for instance, is committed by those scholars who desire to bring the Buddha nearer to the Upanishads by insisting that his silence on some metaphysical questions amounted either to a tacit approval, or to a non-denial of the Upanishadic faith in an eternal Ātman.

At least a dozen occasions and passages can be found in the five Nikāyas and other places in the *Tripiṭaka* where the Buddha is represented as denying the existence of eternal substances including the soul. We shall take note of such passages later Meanwhile we would like the reader to know something about the questions that the Buddha thought and declared to be either unanswerable or such that it was not good policy to get involved in them. According to him, the more important thing was to achieve a thorough understanding of the four Noble Truths, which included the understanding of the way and the method to put an end to suffering and attain *Nirvāna*.

In *Majjhima N* (2 3.2; sutta 72), in answering a monk, the Buddha denies several pairs of assertion, e g : the world is eternal, the world is not eternal, the body and the soul are one, the body and the soul are different; after death Tathāgata remains, Tathāgata ceases to be after death; Tathāgata is and is not after death; Tathāgata neither is, nor is not after death. The Buddha declares all such assertions to be productive of confusion and of no use. They do not contribute to the strengthening of the sentiment of detachment, nor to the cessation of suffering That is why the Buddha refuses to get entangled in such questions; instead, he prefers to show the way to the practical problem of the eradication of suffering A similar theme occurs in *Digha N* (3.6 10-11). In the very first sutta of this latter Nikāya, mention is made of as many as 62 'isms' or religio-philosophic viewpoints regarding the world and the soul, about causation, morals and the destiny of the soul, etc. Avoiding idle speculation, the Buddha refuses to discuss quite a few questions considered important by several of his contemporary teachers In *Saṁyutta N* (14.1. 1-4) the Buddha declares that the beginning of the world cannot be ascertained, nor the beginning of the living beings caught in the meshes of *Saṁsāra*. A single kalpa has a very long duration indeed, and the number of kalpas that has elapsed is beyond counting.

The Buddha's sound advice is that a man of understanding

instead of wasting his time in idle questioning, should aim at overcoming suffering and attaining the goal, called *Nirvāṇa*, which marks the end of suffering. For this one has to depend mainly on oneself. In the famous *Attadīpa Sutta* (21.1.5.1) the Buddha exhorts the bhikkhus as follows: It should not be supposed that the Buddha's gospel is altogether bereft of metaphysical ideas. In our own time, P F. Strawson has distinguished between two types of metaphysics, descriptive and revisionary. According to him, Aristotelian metaphysical thought belongs to the first type while the systems of Plato, Spinoza and Hegel, e.g., belong to the second type. Revisionary metaphysics seeks to supplant the commonsensical view of things by one involving highly speculative notions. On the contrary, descriptive metaphysics seeks to elucidate the concepts embedded in everyday language, e.g. those of space, time, causation, substance, quality and the like, that are used by everyman—without of course, sufficient awareness of their implications and interconnections. The Buddha's metaphysical ideas are intended to be descriptive of actual experience from which they are supposed finally to derive

The two fundamental ideas of early Buddhist metaphysics are the doctrine of *anattā* or no-soul, and that of "*Pratītya Samutpāda* (Pali *patichcha samuppāda*). The first asserts the fluxional nature of the phenomenal world and finds expression in the epigrammatic statement· everything is without a soul (*sarvam anātman*). Every existent, the Buddha avers, is momentary and perishable, fraught with pain or suffering, and lacking an enduring soul. The second principle, allied to the doctrine of momentariness, is that of Dependent Origination or Conditioned Production (*Pratītya Samutpāda*) According to the second principle, the phenomena that make up the world are all conditioned things; in their turn they all act as conditions or causes leading to the emergence of other phenomena. Here we may take note of the early Buddhist definition of reality, which, while it might not have been formulated by the Buddha, is closely related to his notion of *Pratītya Samutpāda*. The real—so the definition runs—is that which has causal efficiency. The *sarva-darśana-sangraha* carefully summarizes the argument which seeks to prove the momentary character of all that exists on the basis of the aforesaid definition of reality. The several metaphysical insights or doctrines furnish the logical

basis for the Buddha's four Noble Truths. They are conveniently summarised in the *Samyutta N.* (V. 4.20):

1) Now this, monks, is the noble truth of pain· birth is painful, old age is painful, sickness is painful, death is painful, sorrow, lamentation, dejection, and despair are painful In short, the five groups of grasping (Khandhas) are painful.
2) Now this, monks, is the nobel truth of the cause of pain· the craving, which tends to rebirth, combined with pleasure and lust, finding pleasure here and there namely, the craving for passion, the craving for existence, the craving for non-existence
3) 'Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of pain, the cessation without a remainder of craving, the abandonment, forsaking, release, non-attachment'.
4) 'Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the way that leads to the cessation of pain. this is the Noble Eightfold way, namely, right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration'[1]

Buddha's emphasis on suffering as the characteristic mark of life has invited the charge of pessimism. Actually, he is only being realistic in stressing the transient and therefore painful character of things for which we cherish concern and suffer worry and anxiety. This perception is shared by quite a few religio-philosophic thinkers of India including the propagators of Sāṅkhya and the Nyāya systems. As a matter of fact, it is the over-sensitiveness of the Indian mind that makes it see and associate pain with activities and pursuits involved in the struggle for existence. There are several reasons why the gospel of the Buddha, as also the philosophies of the Sāṅkhya and the Nyāya, do not deserve to be dubbed as pessimistic. First, they all claim to give us insight into the causes of suffering and to indicate in a precise, scientific manner the ways and means by which the suffering may be eradicated; second, they all seek to visualise the state of non-suffering, occasionally characterized as the state of bliss or blessedness.

[1]Quoted from *Early Buddhist Scriptures* in *A Survey of Buddhism* (Bangalore: The Indian Institute of World Culture, 1976), p. 125.

In the third place, all these systems maintain that man can put an end to his suffering by cultivating the right cognitive viewpoint and the right attitude towards the vicissitudes of life in the world. Furthermore, Buddhism encourages and even enjoins the cult of self-dependence in the pursuit of the ultimate goal of no-suffering or blessedness. It is typical of classical Indian thinkers, as we have already hinted at in the previous chapter, that they attach the greatest importance to the quest of knowledge, or the correct vision of the conditions of man's existence in the world.

Cultivation of right knowledge, or the right view is, of course, the first item or step in the Buddha's eightfold path, which consists in comprehending the truth of the four Noble Truths—all related to suffering. A proper understanding of the phenomenon of suffering involves, as already stated, the comprehension of the facts of impermanence and soullessness of things. Buddhism declares that there are no real *objects* to be found anywhere in experience: the so-called objects are, actually, mere aggregates of momentary atoms—called *svalakshaṇas* in later Buddhist philosophy. Just as there are no abiding *objects* in nature, so there is no abiding *self* in the psycho-physical organism known as a living animal or man. The human organism is resolvable, without remainder, into the five *skandhas* (or aggregates), even as a chariot is reducible, without remainder, into its component parts, viz the poles, the axle, the wheels, framework, flag staff, yoke, reins and goad. This is the burden of the celebrated dialogue between the venerable Nāgasena, and the Bactrian King Milinda as recorded in the Pali Buddhist classic *Milinda-Panho* (The Questions of King Milinda').[1] The inclination to see things and objects, either in the subjective or in the objective realm of experience, is called *Satkāya-Drishṭi.* This sort of *Drishṭi* or view of things is condemned by the Buddha in a number of Suttas or Sermons delivered by him.

The view that affirms the non-existence of objects is technically called *Pudgala-Nairātmya,* it is characteristic of the Hīnayāna schools of Buddhist philosophy, i.e. the Sarvāstivādins and the Vaibhāshikas. The reason why so much emphasis is laid on the

[1]A good idea of this text can be had from the extract included in *Buddhist Scriptures* (Edward Conze (ed.), Penguin Books, reprinted 1969), pp 146-162.

negation of substances or substantive objects is, in the last analysis, a religious one Once one is convinced of the non-reality or the non-existence of objects, one would cease to have emotional attachment to them. Now attachment and aversion (which are designated *kleśas* or afflictions in Buddhist religio-philosophic literature) lie at the root of *Samsāra*; they themselves spring from *avidyā* or ignorance The Mahāyāna thinkers, too, aimed at purging the individual of the said *kleśas*, by liberating him from the illusion of objects. However, rather than emphasize the momentary or impermanent character of objects of attachment and aversion (which character they nevertheless took for granted), they preferred to describe them as *Śūnya*, or as infected with *Śūnyatā*. This doctrine of *Śūnyatā*, which came to be particularly associated with the Mādhyamika School of the Mahāyāna, constitutes a rival interpretation of the principle of *Pratītya-samutpāda*. According to Hīnayāna thinkers that principle has reference to origination in time brought about by preceding causes or conditions. The *Abhidharma Kośa* of Vasubandhu divides the entities in the world into two classes, the conditioned and the unconditioned. The latter term is applicable to *Ākāśa* and *Nirvāṇa*, all else is included under the conditioned (*samskṛita*) In the Hīnayāna terminology the entities in question are designated *Dharmas*.

The concept of *Śūnyatā* has no necessary references to time, its emphasis being not on *causal sequence* but on *relativity*. Things are what they are, and have characteristics which they seem to exhibit, in virtue of their relationship with other things. Thus the term 'fuel' has a particular meaning only in relation to another term 'fire'. Neither of these terms can make sense without reference to the other. This is true of all the concepts with which language operates; it is equally true of the phenomena signified by them. It may be noted here that in the Mahāyāna system, the term *Śūnyatā*, while generally referring to the realm of relativity, is occasionally made to signify reality itself. However, the motive behind the description of phenomena as *Śūnya* is more or less the same as that behind their description as momentary and impermanent: it is intended to inculcate in the mind of the aspirant the sense of disenchantment or detachment towards the order of phenomenal objects.

BUDDHIST MORALITY

The Buddha was a great religious prophet, he was an equally great moral teacher. In fact his religious teachings are deeply coloured by his moral outlook, so much so indeed that some scholars are inclined to describe Buddhism as an ethical religion. Dr. Radhakrishnan calls Buddha's doctrine ethical idealism. While the final goal of life, according to the Buddha, is *Nirvāna*, the discipline recommended for reaching it is largely ethical. Later followers of the Buddha have tended to lay greater emphasis on *Prajñā* or philosophical enlightenment and on meditation, but the Master's teaching as recorded in the Pali canon seems to attach as much, if not greater, importance to moral purity of life as to the understanding of the doctrine.

The Vinaya part of the *Tripiṭaka* is intended to be a manual of conduct for the monks or the bhikkhus But in other works the Buddha seems to be concerned to lay down principles or precepts of moral behaviour for all men and women The main principles are contained in the delineation of the eightfold path (*ashṭāṅga-mārga*) itself, which also constitutes the pathway to the goal of *Nirvāṇa*. That path is also claimed to be the middle path, 'free from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification.' However, true to the metaphysical tradition of ancient India, the Buddha believes that right conduct must ultimately base itself on right belief leading to right sort of aspiration. Our right belief or beliefs, however, should relate to the phenomenon of suffering and its cause or causes, and to the way suffering can be eradicated or overcome. The Buddha does not ask us to have uncritical faith in entities located in a hypothetical other world; in this sense he may be said to be opposed to metaphysics of the speculative type. But the rejection of such metaphysics does not imply shutting one's eyes or being unresponsive to the realities and claims of our higher spiritual demands and aspirations.

Here we may indicate some characteristic emphases in the Buddha's moral teachings. These emphases are brought out through parables and illustrations that may be understood and appreciated by the common people. Addressing a village-chief in Nalanda, the Buddha observed· 'Do you think a person who indulges in killing (innocent) animals, theft, adultery, telling lies

etc., and is harsh in speech, given to gossiping, is greedy and mean—can such a person attain heaven through prayers (as by priests) in his behalf?' The Buddha concluded: one attains heaven by one's actions (*Karma*) and not by prayer (*S.N.* 40.6). In the *Dhammapada* (12.8) we read: only the sin that one has committed defiles him. Purity and defilement come to one through one's own deeds; none other can purify a person. Again we are told:

> One should endeavour to be what one teaches others to become; one must first subdue oneself before aspiring to subdue others; it is difficult indeed to exercise control over oneself. One is one's own master, who other can be his master? Having well-subdued oneself one attains that which is difficult of attainment (i.e. *Nirvāna*). (ibid., 12.3, 4)

The Buddha's moral teachings are addressed to all sections of people, to the laymen including the householders as well as to those who aspire after higher spiritual perfection. In the case of the latter, he was also anxious to inculcate certain doctrinal attitudes as also to rid them of what he considered to be erroneous metaphysical views or prejudices. But in the case of the laymen or the householders he proceeds in a direct, matter of fact manner to recommend a course of life that is virtuous as well as prudent. Here are some of his maxims and precepts bearing on moral life and conduct:

> Not associating with the fools, keeping the company of the learned or wise, honouring those who deserve honour—this conduces to good luck or good fortune. Serving mother and father, looking after wife and children, and not indulging in irregular activities—this contributes to good fortune. Practising charity, living righteously, extending respect and courtesy to relatives and friends and engaging oneself in acceptable forms of action—this is conducive to good fortune. Renouncing sinful actions by mind, body and speech, abstention from wine and a readiness to undertake charitable deeds—this leads to good luck. (*Sutta Nipāta*, 2.4)

The Buddha did not attach importance to rituals and ritualistic practices. In *Majjhima N.* (1.1.7) it is stated that a man of black deeds may bathe daily in the so-called sacred rivers, but

that won't purify him. Surely the rivers cannot purify a sinner Elsewhere (*Saṁyutta Nikāya,* 7 1.9) we read: *Dharma* or righteousness is a lake, with its bathing sites made up by upright conduct, where wise people like to take baths. Purified in body, such people alone get across (the ocean of sorrow)

The Buddha did not at all believe in caste-distinctions. Nobody is to be accounted Brahmin or Śūdra because of his birth in a particular family. A whole chapter in the *Dhammapada* contains verses ending with the expression, 'him I call a Brāhmaṇa ' Some of these verses are quoted below·

> One who does not do evil by body, speech or mind, being controlled in these—him I call a Brāhmaṇa One does not become a Brāhmaṇa by bearing matted hair, not by lineage nor by birth in a particular caste. One in whom there are truth and righteousness, he alone is a Brâhmana. He is blessed. O fool, what is the use of matted hair or of the raiment made of the antelope's skin? Thy interior is sullied with wickedness; the outside thou makest clean (in vain). He who bears patiently reproach, physical maltreatment and imprisonments; who has forgiveness for his force (army), him I call a Brāhman. One who utters true speech, free from harshness, clearly understood, giving offence to none, him I call a Brāhmaṇa. One who has abandoned attachment to good and evil, who has conquered grief and is free from passion and impurity, him I call a Brāhmaṇa.
>
> (*Dhammapada* 26 9, 11, 12, 17, 30)

The Buddha lays special emphasis on some virtues, e g forgiveness, friendliness and compassion. A monk, who proposes to preach the gospel of the Buddha in a region inhabited by people temperamentally harsh and turbulent, is shown holding the following dialogue with him. The Buddha asks: 'If the people of the region abuse you and speak evil words to you, how would you feel ?' The monk replies that in that case he would think the people of the region to be too good in not striking him. Questioned again by the Buddha, he says: 'If they strike me with the hand, I would consider them good for not beating me with a stick. 'What if they strike you with a stick?' asked the Buddha 'In that case I would consider them good for not attacking me

with a weapon'. Even if they kill him, the monk concludes in answering the last question, he would still think them good; for disillusioned with painful living, some people search for somebody who would deliver them from a miserable existence—such a deliverer, come his way without that trouble, should be welcome to him. Thus did the monk reassure the Buddha of his competence in the practice of forgiving endurance.

The Buddhist canon makes mention of four virtues whose combination constitutes the *Brahma Vihāras*. These are practised by persons of high spiritual calibre. According to Patañjali, the author of the *Yoga Sūtras*, these virtues (i.e. *maitri* or friendliness, *Karuṇā* or compassion, *muditā* or the disposition to rejoice in the good luck of others, and *upekshā* or the propensity to ignore the misdeeds of others) contribute to the tranquillity of mind. Of these, the first finds frequent mention in the Pali *Nikāyas* The virtue of compassion (*Karuṇā*) acquired special significance as an attribute of the Bodhisattva in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

In the first place a person should rid himself of the sentiments of hatred, and enmity. The very first chapter of the *Dhammapada* suggests striking remedies for conquering hatred and overcoming hostile sentiments. We read:

> Never will hatred cease in persons who constantly brood over thoughts like these: he abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, he robbed me. Those who do not harbour such thoughts are alone able to shed the feelings of hostility. Never are the feelings of hostility appeased here by harbouring hostile sentiments, they can only be appeased by non-hostility. This is the eternal law. (1.3, 4, 5)

But it is not enough not to entertain hostile sentiments with respect to anybody; indeed, one should try positively to cultivate friendly feelings towards and do good to others. One should behave in such a manner that all living beings, coming in contact with him, should be well-protected and happy. One should wish happiness to all beings, big or small, stationed near or far away One should not attempt deception or cheating; nor should one, out of ill-feeling or enmity, wish evil to others. Even as a mother, not caring for her own life, extends protection to her only son

so should a man extend affection to all living beings.[1] The following extracts from a passage in the *Aṅguttara N.* contain some of the finest utterances on friendliness attributed to the Buddha:

> Monks, that ariyan disciple, who is thus without coveting and malvolence, not bewildered but self-possessed and recollecting, with a heart possessed of love abides suffusing one quarter of the world, likewise, the second, third and fourth quarters of the world, likewise above, below, across, everywhere, for all sorts and conditions. . . . Then, again, he suffuses one quarter of the world with a heart possessed of compassion . . . with a heart possessed of joy . . with a heart possessed of balance, likewise the second, third, and fourth, quarters of the world."[2]

Ancient religious teachers attached the greatest importance to the pursuit of the religious goal, and consequently to saving knowledge and correct spiritual discipline. They believed that they could serve humanity best by imparting the above knowledge and by instructing it as to the ways and means to attain the highest goal of life. We find a graphic account of the mind and spirit of the Bodhisattva, who abstains from entering *Nirvāṇa* for which he is fully qualified, because he has taken the vow to save the entire living creation from the clutches of *saṁsāra* or suffering, in the *Bodhicharyāvatāra* of Śāntideva. The ideal of the Bodhisattva was the special contribution of Mahāyāna Buddhism to the corpus of Buddhist spiritual thought.

The Bodhisattva is greatly moved by the spectacle of the misery and folly of the people around him—the worldings deluded by ignorance. They are attached to sensual pleasures and are enslaved by egotism, pride, false opinions, lust etc., and know no rest. Not loving virtue and duty, they are ungrateful to their parents and teachers. The plight of the worldlings moves the Bodhisattva to pity and compassion Determined to help the creatures, he reflects as follows:

> Whatever Good I have acquired by doing all this, may I (by that merit) appease and assuage all the pains and sorrows of

[1]*Sutta Nipāta* 8 3, 6, 7.
[2]English Tr from Anand K. Coomaraswamy and I.B Horner (eds), *The Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha* (Bombay. Jaico Publishing House, 1956), pp. 134, 135.

all living beings... May I be like unto a healing drug for the sick. May I be the physician for them and also tend them till they are whole again. May I allay the pain of hunger and thirst by showers of food and drink. And may I myself be food and drink during the intermediate aeon of famine .. I renounce my bodies, my pleasures and my Merit in the past, present and future, so that all beings may attain the Good... to give up everything that is *nirvāna*: and my mind seeks *nirvāṇa*. If I must give up everything, then it is best to bestow it upon the living beings . . . May I be the protector of the helpless. May I be the guide of wayfarers. May I be a boat, a bridge and a causebay for all who wish to cross (stream) May I be a lamp for all who need a lamp. May I be a bed for all who lack a bed. May I be a slave to all who want a slave.[1]

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, *Prajñā* (understanding and insight) and *Karuṇā* or compassion are considered to be the most important virtues. In later Mahāyāna, we are told, compassion became more important even than *Prajñā*. According to Dr. Hardayal, both the preponderance of Bodhisattva ideal and the growing emphasis on compassion were due to the Bhāgavata and Śaiva cults whose principal deities, Vishnu and Śiva, were hailed as Saviours. Hardayal also envisages Christian influence on the Mahāyāna which, in its turn, exerted influence on Christianity.[2]

An important part of Buddhist moral-spiritual teaching is their emphasis on the practice of six or ten virtues known as *Pāramitās*. The term *Pāramitā* connotes higher or perfect virtue. While earlier literature generally refers to six *pāramitās*, their number rose to ten in later literature. The six *pāramitās* are *Dāna* (giving, generosity, liberality), *Śīla* (righteous conduct in general); *Kshānti* (forbearance, patience); *Vīrya* (energy), *Dhyāna* (meditation); and *Prajñā* (wisdom). The *Bodhicharayāvatāra* elaborates and illustrates these virtues at length

[1]Quoted by Hardayal in *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprinted 1970), pp 57, 58
[2]See ibid., Chapter II.

NIRVĀṆA

The idea of *Nirvāṇa* is the most important part of the Buddha's doctrine, it is also a most elusive concept. Most of the religions conceive salvation of the soul to be the supreme goal of human life. What makes the doctrine of *Nirvāṇa* particularly difficult to understand, is the Buddha's unequivocal denial of eternal entities including not only God but also the soul of traditional religions If there is no soul that may enjoy everlasting bliss or beatitude of salvation, what can that salvation or *Nirvāṇa* mean to us? Again the term *Nirvāṇa* does not convey the same meaning to the different sects and schools of Buddhism: it connotes one set of meanings to the Sautrāntikas, another to the Sarvāstivadins, and yet other meanings to the Mādhyamikas and the Yogāchāras. In view of these differences it becomes difficult to formulate the view held by the Buddha himself. Nor can the Buddha's views be ascertained by concentrating on the *Nikāyas*, for these having been compiled, like the Christian gospels, long after the death of the Master, contain passages supporting all the rival interpretations. They are, according to one eminent scholar, 'a mosaic made up of materials of different times and places.'[1] According to Dr. N. Dutt there are four distinct lines of interpretation of *Nirvāna* followed by different Pali scholars. These are. (i) that *Nirvāṇa* is annihilation; (ii) that it is an inconceivable and inexpressible eternal state; (iii) that *Nirvāṇa* has been left undefined (*avyākṛita*) by the Buddha; and (iv) that *Nirvāna* is eternal, pure and infinite consciousness[2]

Partly, no doubt, the statements about *Nirvāṇa* made by the Buddha may be seen to be complementary to rather than inconsistent with one another. Thus, according to the Buddha, while entire conditioned phenomenal existence is characterized by impermanence, suffering and selflessness *Nirvāna*, the unconditioned, marks the negation of the above features. A famous verse states The Tathāgata has explained the cause of everything that is caused or conditioned; also has he explained the extinction of

[1]Nalinaksha Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism* (Calcutta· Firma KLM Private Ltd., 1976), p. 195.
[2]Loc. cit.

all phenomena that are conditioned.'[1] *Nirvāna* is extinction of the afflictions or Kleśas such as attachment and aversion, indeed, it marks the end of birth and death and their accompaniments or of *Samārsa.*

This, however, does not support the Sautrāntic theory that *Nirvāṇa* is annihilation. There are, indeed, a number of statements in Pali literature contradicting such an interpretation. Thus in the *Itivuttaka* the Buddha is reported as saying: 'Atthi, bhikkhve, abhūtam akatam asankhatam' (O Bhikkhus there is something that is unborn, uncaused, uncompounded).[2] Still more emphatic is the following passage in the *Udāna*

> 'There is, brethren, an unborn, a non-become, a not-made, a not compound. If there were not, brethren, this that is unborn, not become, not-made, not-compounded, there could not be made any escape from what is born, become, made, and compounded.'[3]

Nirvāṇa, then, is opposed to all that is born or become and so is perishable Edward Conze points out that this particular feature or aspect of *Nirvāna* is expressed by a number of terms in Buddhist literature. Some of these terms or epithets are enumerated by him in the following passage:

> Nirvāna is (i) permanent, (ii) stable, (iii) unchanging, (iv) imperishable (achyuta), (v) without end (an-anta), (vi) lasting endlessly (aty-antam), (vii) non-production (because it causes nothing), (viii) extinction of birth, (ix) unborn, (x) not liable to dissolution (a-palokina), (xi) uncreated (a-bhūtam), (xii) not going on (a-ppavatta), (xiii) free from disease, (xiv) unageing, and (xv) undying (a-maranam).[4]

Nirvāna is frequently described as appeasement of suffering (*upaśama*), a peaceful state or as 'the end of woe.' Also *Nirvāṇa* is stated to involve negation of the world or of the odious features of the world; it is supposed to be not of or in the world,

[1]Ye dharmāh hetuprabhavāh hetum teshām Tathāgatah hyavadat/teshām cha yo nirodha evamvādī Mahāśramaṇah.

[2]Quoted by N. Dutt, op. cit, p. 219.

[3]F L. Woodland's translation *Some Sayings of the Buddha*, p 220.

[4]Conze, op. cit., p. 73.

hard to see, astonishing, wonderful, subtle, ineffable, distinct from the material order consisting of earth, water etc.[1]

Conze concludes that *Nirvāna* is 'transcendental, and uncognizable by logical thought'[2] Bhikshu Sangharakshita observes that the view that *Nirvāṇa* was ineffable 'was axiomatic for all schools.'[3] That *Nirvāna* is ineffable eluding the known categories of thought and/or language is also the view of Nāgārjuna, the great Mādhyamika thinker. The Mādhyamika description of *Nirvāṇa*, however, is indistinguishable from their characterization of Ultimate Reality.

Both the view that *Nirvāna* is ineffable and the proposition that Reality is such with implied identification of the two, again, is traceable to the Buddha himself. The doctrine of *Trikāya*, a later development within the Mahāyāna, conceives the Buddha, in the form of Dharmakāya, as constituting the essential nature of things. The Dharmakāya, thus, becomes another synonym for reality So does the term Tathāgata, which signifies Buddha in his essential nature. Buddhism, indeed, believes on the one hand, in the existence or being of innumerable Buddhas, on the other it conceives Buddhahood or Buddha nature to be a single essence, that underlies the multiplicity of phenomenal appearances.

In general the Pali *Nikāyas* are inclined to look upon Gautama the Buddha as a human being with a human body. The doctrine of Trikāya conceives three bodies or forms of the Buddha, i.e. the visible, human form (*Rūpakāya* or *Nirmāṇakāya*), the heavenly form or forms of several Buddhas (*Sambhogakāya*) and the transcendental form (*Dharmakāya*). Some scholars, e.g. Prof. Masson-Oarsel and Bhikshu Sangharakshita, are of opinion that rudiments of the later doctrine, which identifies the Buddha or Tathāgata with the ultimate essence of things, can be found in the Pali canon and later Hīnayāna works. Dr. N. Dutt has indicated several places and passages in aforesaid literature that *may* lend themselves to such interpretation. Apart from these the Buddha's persistent refusal to answer the question (*D.N.* I.9; III.6; etc.) whether Tathāgata does or does not survive death smacks of mystery.

[1]Ibid , p. 75.
[2]Ibid., pp. 76-77
[3]*A Survey of Buddhism*, p. 256.

Dr. Dutt refers, among others to the following passages or expressions.[1]

1) A monk called Vakkali on his death-bed desired to see Buddha in person. The Buddha went to see him and said· 'O Vakkali, he who sees the *Dharma* sees me; he who sees me sees the *Dharma*.' Bhikshu Sangharakshita thinks that it is possible to see in this utterance of the Buddha 'a declaration of His essential identity with the Absolute.'[2]

2) In a passage in the *Anguttara Nikāya* the Buddha says that he is neither a god, nor a gandharva, nor a man. According to Prof. Masson-Oarsel the utterance hints at the Mahāyāna conception of the three *kāyas*.

3) Vasubandhu in his *Abhidharmakośa* raises the question that, seeing that Gautama the Buddha is dead, how can one be asked to take refuge in him? He suggests that what one is really required to take refuge in is the *dharmakāya*, a collective name for the qualities or *dharmas* that characterize the purified personality or substratum (*āśraya*) and also the qualities attaching to the Buddha. A devotee should take refuge, not in the rūpakāya (visible form) of the Buddha, but in *Buddhatva* or Buddha essence.

There is little scope for doubt that the full-fledged doctrine of Trikāya, which reifies the characteristic qualities of the Buddha into the ultimate essence of things, was a later development consciously sponsored by the Mahāyāna. From the humanistic point of view the following significant question may be asked: Is the *Dharmakāya* to be looked upon as transcendent to the phenomenal world or as immanent in it? The Hīnayānic conception of *Nirvāṇa* as an unconditioned (*asaṁskṛita*) *dharma* puts it in opposition to the phenomenal world or the order of the conditioned. Such a conception cannot, for obvious reasons, have much interest for the humanist. It is significant that the Mahāyānists, who finally shaped the doctrine of Trikāya, were also led to abolish the distinction between *Saṁsāra* and *Nirvāṇa*, the conditioned and the unconditioned This crucial step was taken by Nāgārjuna, the greatest interpreter and exponent of the Mahāyāna Sūtras. These Sūtras, comprising a number of texts in hybrid Sanskrit,

[1] *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, pp 144ff.
[2] *A Survey of Buddhism*, p 267.

claimed to embody the profounder, esoteric teachings of the Buddha as distinguished from his more popular views contained in the Pali canon.

Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamaka Śāstra* better known as *Mādhyamika Kārikā*, is a highly disturbing treatise revelling in dialectical subtleties. The central thesis of the work is that all modes of thought aiming at explicating the structure of reality are ridden with inner contradictions, and so are not merely inadequate but positively misleading. Reality as such lies totally beyond the categories of thought or language. As the *Bodhicharyāvatara* (IX.2) avers· 'The *Tattva* or the real is that which is invisible to or incomprehensible by the intellect, the realm of the intellect is identical with the phenomenal order.' The world-phenomenon, according to the Mādhyamika, is a consequence of thought-constructions indulged in by the intellect operating under the impulsion of beginningless *vāsanā* or desire. In the last analysis Desire or *Vāsanā*, comparable to Schopenhauer's Will, is responsible for the projection of world-appearance. *Prajñā* or knowledge alone can free the intellect from the domination of *vāsanā* or desire, by showing that the objects on which it is fastened are lacking in essence or self-nature. In other words the phenomenal order of objects is but a false appearance.

True to the devastating consequences of his dialectical treatment of all thought constructions, Nāgārjuna is constrained to state that *Nirvāna* can be characterized neither as a positive nor as a negative entity. For anything that is positive arises out of conditions or causes, and *Nirvāṇa* is supposed to be unconditioned (*asaṁskṛita*). Again *Nirvāna* cannot be declared to be negative or non-existent, for non-existence is unintelligible without reference to existence or the existent. *Abhāva* or non-existence, in fact, is nothing but the negation of projected or supposed existence.[1] *Nirvāna*, in fact, implies total destruction or rejection of thought-constructions of all sorts [2]

And this rejection applies to the entire set of categories created

[1]Cf *Madhyamaka Śāstra* XV.5: bhāvasya hy anathābhāvam abhāvam bruvate janāh. *Prasannapadā* on XXV.8: tatrāpi bhāva-kalpanā-pratishedha-mātram, na abhāvakalpanā.

[2]*Prasannapadā* on XXV.3· niravaśesha-kalpanā-kshaya-rupam eva nirvāṇam.

by the Sarvāstivādin and other Hīnayāna thinkers. *Nirvāna* cannot consist in the extinction of *kleśas* (afflictions) and skandhas (so-called five constituents of personal existence) for, if these are real or endowed with self-nature (*svabhāva*), then their extinction is unthinkable. For the self-nature of a thing is indestructible. As a matter of fact the so-called *kleśas* and *skandhas* are nothing more than thought-constructions, which should be abandoned by true seekers of *Nirvāna* Actually, the distinction between *Saṁsāra* and *Nirvāna* is itself a thought-construction. Boldly rejecting this distinction, Nāgārjuna affirms complete identity of *Samsāra* and *Nirvāna.* There is not, according to him, the slightest difference between the two [1] Thus in the Mādhyamika system *Nirvāna* ceases to be something transcendent to the empirical or phenomenal world.

Here we may pause to take note of the far-reaching agreement between Mahāyāna Buddhism and some Hindu systems of thought Both according to the Sānkhya and the Advaita Vedānta bondage of the Purusha or Ātman is a mere appearance; therefore, emancipation or *Moksha*, too, is but an appearance. This means, according to the Advaita Vedānta, that both the phenomenal world and the soul's association with it are appearances projected by *Avidyā* or the principle of cosmic illusion Both envisage the possibility of *Jīvanmukti* (liberation in life-time) for the person who has attained right vision or the true insight into the nature of things. The Mahāyānic view corresponds to this doctrine in essentials, the differences being due largely to their peculiar terminologies. Thus while the Vedānta, following the Upanishads, tends to conceive Brahman in a positive way, describing it as *Sat, Chit* and *Ānanda*, the Śūnyavādin is pledged to observing complete silence about it. To him noumenal reality or ultimate truth is absolute silence,[2] lying as it does absolutely beyond speech, which is an instrument of distortion of the real. Again, the Advaitin assigns a place of privilege to the self among appearances. Since it conceives the self to be, in its essential nature, identical with Brahman, the real can be realized in self-vision. The Mādhyamika does not concede any special status to the self, nor does he

[1]*Mādhyamika Kārikā* XXV.19-20
[2]Paramārtho hy āryāṇām tūshṇīmbhāvah-*Prasannapadā* on 1.3.

spell out whether or not he takes the real or Absolute to be a conscious principle. Buddhism, indeed, does not draw any sharp line between the psychic and the physical, both being essential constituents of the human person.[1] The Advaitin, while drawing a radical distinction between Brahman and the world, yet affirms the identity of the former with one's own self To the contrary, the Mādhyamika refuses to entertain a distinction between *Saṁsāra* and *Nirvāna*, i e the phenomenal and the noumenal orders: the noumenal appears as the phenomenal in virtue of the differentiating activity (*prapañcha*) of the intellect. *Nirvāna*, therefore, consists just in the refusal to be carried away by the spatio-temporal and other categories of the intellect. In viewing the world in this manner, viz. as the embodiment of Buddha nature itself, the sage liberates himself from the mirage-like appearances of suffering, causes of suffering, etc., to him even the historical Buddha and his preaching are but false appearance [2]

Nevertheless the sage of above description is deeply moved by the suffering of the creatures caught in the meshes of false views and the *Saṁsāra* projected by those views. As a consequence he is driven to postpone, as it were, his entry into *Nirvāṇa* and to exercise his infinite compassion in the service of the deluded, helplessly struggling creatures. Looked at from a different angle the sage's life may be seen as a series of acts whereby his individual ego is dissolved and merged in the wider stream of human consciousness transfigured by the Buddha vision. The ideal of the Bodhisattva, whose career is impelled by the sentiment of compassion, is an important ingredient of Buddhist humanism. The emphasis on *ahimsā* as the main constituent of righteousness or *dharma* is another important element in that humanism. It may be conceded that the practice of compassion as a factor in the life of the saint or the sage does not find a comparable place in the Advaita Vedāntic code of conduct. Wedded to the *Smārta* tradi-

[1]Readers acquainted with the views of the British idealist *F H. Bradley* on Self and its relation to the Absolute will undoubtedly see the similarity between his and Nāgārjuna's system. Bradley, however, resembles Śaṅkara in holding the Absolute to be of the nature of experience (*aparokshānubhūti*). In this, however, he is less consistent than both Śaṅkara and Nāgārjuna.
[2]Cf. *Mādhyamika Kārikā*, XXV.24: na Kvachit Kasyachit Kaśchit dharmo buddhena deśitah.

tion the Advaitin may even connive at animal sacrifice when it forms part of a Vedic ritual. But all types of *himsā* or killing is strongly condemned by the Sāṅkhya, e.g., among philosophical schools and by the Vaishṇavas of different descriptions. Nor is the motive of compassion as a determinant of the sage's activity unknown to Hindu thinkers. Thus the *Vyāsa-bhāshya* on *Yoga-sūtra* (I 25.) states that Kapila, first or foremost among the liberated souls, preached his philosophical gospel to one Āsuri out of compassion. The *Bhāshya* also makes the general statement that the rise of supreme insight (*ṛitambharā prajñā*) in the yogin is accompanied by the awakening of the feeling of deep compassion for the creatures plunged in ignorance and misery[1] It may also be noted here that *ahimsā*, which is recommended as a virtue to be cultivated by all, is taken to lie at the root of all other virtues or virtuous life as such. Further, it is conceived not merely as a negative measure preventing injury to creatures but also as contributing positively to their well being[2]

Commenting on a verse in *Chatuḥśataka* of Āryadeva (XII.23) Chandrakīrti observes· 'That which is helpful to others in any measure, is all included within Ahimsā.[3]

In conclusion a few words may be added about the other school of Mahāyāna Buddhism called Yogāchara or Vijñānavāda Founded by Maitreya and Asaṅga this idealistic philosophy *par excellence* was elaborated and given final shape by Vasubandhu in his *Triṁśikā*. Absolutely denying the existence of external material objects, as was done by Bishop Berkeley at a much later date, may Vasubandhu declares ultimate reality to be *vijñaptimātra*, which be rendered as pure awareness or consciousness-without-objects This consciousness undergoes real transformation giving rise to the phenomenal world that figures in the experiences of a plurality of subjects or centres of subjectivity. Some scholars, e g. Prof. S.N Das Gupta, find similarity between the *Vijñapti* of Vasubandhu and the Brahman of the Advaita Vedānta[4] The latter, however, is not conceived as undergoing real transformation. Also, Śaṅkara

[1]I 47.
[2]*Yogabhāshya*, II 30: Sarva-bhutopakārārtham pravṛittah.
[3]Yad ishad api paropakārakam tat sarvam apy ahimsāntas saṁvihitam.
[4]Vide his *Indian Idealism* (Cambridge University Press, 1962), Ch. V, Sect. 8

is inclined to permit some sort of reality to the world of external objects.[1]

Nāgārjuna declares (MK. XXII.16.) even Tathāgata to be void of self-nature (niḥsvabhāva), even as the world is devoid of self-essence. Vasubandhu holds substantially the same view. He, however, recognises three types of *niḥsvabhāvatā* or lack of self-nature that characterizes things of diverse sorts, i.e. the imaginery (*parikalpita*) and the dependent (*paratantra*) The real constitutes the third category, it is called parmārthaniḥsvabhāva. It connotes absolute absence of externality; it is the object of final insight, so to say; it is changeless, pure and external.

While diverging in their metaphysical conceptions of reality, the Mādhyamikas and the Vijñānavādins yet agree in their views concerning spiritual discipline, and in the belief that *Nirvāṇa* involves disappearance of the distinction of subject and object and the dissolution of the bonds of *Saṁsāra*.

[1]See *Śārīraka Bhāshya* of Śaṅkara on II 2.28; also my book *An Introduction to Śaṅkara's Theory of Knowledge* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, second ed., 1972), ch. V.

PART TWO

HUMANISM IN MODERN INDIAN THOUGHT

CHAPTER 3

Two Religious Humanists: Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi

WE have seen how the religio-philosophic tradition of India tends to furnish metaphysical basis for humanism. The neo-Vedântic teachers and thinkers, in particular, are inclined to draw important ethical corollaries from the Upanishadic doctrine of the unity of all life and the identity of the Ātman, the spiritual principle considered to be present in the individual, with Brahman, regarded as the all-pervading spiritual ground of the universe. The doctrine also lends support to the democratic emphasis on the dignity of man and the worth of the individual. Both Gandhi and Tagore are Vedântists in their religio-philosophic outlook. However, like Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, both of them are disinclined to see any conflict between the monistic Vedânta as interpreted by Śankara and the dualistic version of it presented by Râmânuja and other Vaishṇava thinkers. In fact both Gandhi and Tagore, while professing one or other form of monistic Vedânta, had been deeply influenced by the devotional creed of Vaishnavism. Of course, neither Tagore nor Gandhi was a believer in incarnations of Godhead. While Gandhi used the popular word 'Râma' to designate God, he expressly denied personality to God. On the other hand Tagore insisted that God should be conceived as a person, Tagore was a great lover and admirer of the Upanishads; on the contrary, Gandhi drew inspiration mainly from

the *Bhagavadgītā*. Tagore's approach to religion and to life was markedly aesthetic, which found fitting expression in his poetry and other literary writings. Despite the fact that Gandhi had the heart and the sensibility of a Vaishṇava devotee, his conception of religion and his approach to life were predominantly ethical. While Tagore was an idealist in thought and in his poetic inspiration, Gandhi claimed to be a practical idealist who sought to realise his moral idealism in actual life, individual and collective. Tagore was a great internationalist who looked upon various cultures as expressions of one single reality and strove to bring together the rich cultural traditions of Asia and Europe. On the other hand Gandhi, as a man of action who had to lead his people in their struggle for independence against the British, sought to unite the people of the world in common pursuit of justice and in the establishment of a moral-spiritual order in world-society.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861-1941)

As already stated Tagore was a devoted connoisseur of the Upanishads. Now the Upanishads are noted, on the one hand, for their doctrine of Brahman which is conceived now as immanent ground of the universe and now as acosmic or transcendent; and, on the other, for their assertion of identity of Ātman with Brahman. Vaishṇava thinkers, wedded to the cult of devotion to their supreme Lord, were in general inclined to see some sort of dualism or difference between God and man. The Vaishṇava tradition is generally described as theistic. The Vaishṇava thinkers refuse to take the Upanishadic assertions of identity between Brahman and the individual self literally; according to them the statements in question are indicative either of close relationship between the two or of the soul's essential dependence on God. Now Rabindranath Tagore, like his fellow Brahma-Samajists, is supposed to be a theist rather than an absolutist. However, it seems to us that his conception of God is nearer to absolutism with implied oneness of man with God than to theism which tends to see a gulf between the creator and his creation. This latter view is characteristic of religions of Semitic origin. The view is foreign to Tagore's conception of the relationship between God and man, which circumstance brings him in line with the Advaitic inter-

preters of Upanishadic Vedānta Indeed, Tagore's conception of the relationship between man and God is more humanistic than even that of the traditional votaries of monistic Vedānta For while traditional Vedānta is preoccupied mainly with Ātman viewed in its disembodied essense, Tagore's concern is for humanity in her actual, concrete existence. While introducing his lectures on the *Religion of Man*, he indicates their subject-matter in the following words· 'The idea of the humanity of our God, or the divinity of Man the Eternal, is the main subject of this book.'[1]

Tagore's thought, indeed, moves very close to humanistic quarters. Acquainted as he must have been with the relativistic, if not sceptical, thought currents of the West, he could not be insensitive to the anthropomorphic element in man's faith and even knowledge. The awareness of this fact led him to assert unequivocally that the universe to which we are related through our sense perception, reason, or imagination is necessarily man's universe.'[2] Elsewhere he observes:

> For our universe is the sum total of what Man feels, knows, imagines, reasons to be, and of whatever is knowable to him now or in another time. It affects him differently in its different aspects, in its beauty, its inevitable sequence of happenings, its potentiality; and the world proves itself to him only in its varied effects upon his senses, imagination and reasoning mind.[3]

The view that the universe as known to or interpreted by man in essentially a human universe occurs again and again in Tagore's reflective writings. He vehemently defends it in his conversations with Albert Einstein. Einstein expressed his firm belief in the objectivity of at any rate scientific truth, which meant to him its independence of the human mind and even of human existence. He believed, for instance, 'that the Pythagorian theorem in geometry states something that is approximately true, independent of the existence of man.'[4] As against this Tagore maintained that, inasmuch as the truth called scientific was reached through the

[1]*The Religion of Man* (London Paperback edition, 1961), p. 11.
[2]Ibid., p. 46
[3]Ibid , p. 15.
[4]Amiya Chakravarty (ed.), *A Tagore Reader* (London, 1961), p. 111.

process of logic, i.e. by an organ of thought which is human, it could not claim to be more than human truth. According to the present writer, on the particular point at issue here, Tagore was more correct than Einstein. It would be difficult for us to give meaning to the concepts, whose relationships find expression in the Pythagorian theorem, without reference to human ways of thought, the concepts in question are simply not be met with in the realm of nature supposed to have been produced by a hypothetical creator.

Here the question arises: if truth is relative to man—if man is the measure of all things—then how can we speak of truth at all? Tagore seeks to escape this sceptical conclusion by taking recourse to idealistic conception of an Infinite Mind, which he identifies with Upanishadic Brahman. This mind is also referred to by him as the Universal human mind. It is also described as 'A Being who is the infinite in man' and occasionally alluded to as 'Man the Eternal' or 'Man the Divine' Tagore also uses the expression 'Supreme Person' to indicate the reality in question. Not being a systematic philosopher Tagore does not specifically raise the question whether and how, if at all, the existence of such Mind, Person or Principle can be established. However, he is not unaware of the problem and so offers some considerations why he is led to believe in such a Being—yet another term used by him. One consideration consists in reflective awareness of the actuality of progress and of what is involved in it Progress, he says, 'means that there in an ideal perfection which the individual seeks to reach by extending his limits in knowledge, power, love, enjoyment, thus approaching the universal '[1] The reality of the universal mind is also attested by the possibility of the discovery of truth by the individual mind. All the possibilities of such realisation are comprehended in the universal mind, which bestows validity on the thoughts and apprehensions of the individual minds.

Here a passing comment on the proofs or considerations advanced above is in order Like many an idealistic thinker Tagore seems to believe that a state or the stage of perfection already exists in a realised form somewhere in some Being, which state

[1]*Religion of Man*, p. 15.

or Being includes perfect knowledge, beauty, goodness and other values. That belief is a mere assumption—one should say a tremendous assumption—which cannot be justified by the known history of human thought and culture. As Tagore himself realises there is to be found endless variety of expressions in the realm of art and literature, and in the various domains of thought, even scientific thought. Man's constructions in all these spheres are characterized not only by diversity but also by unforeseen types of novelty and strangeness. While there is no scope for doubting the fact of evolutionary progress in man's knowledge and in his aesthetic and reflective culture, it does not stand to reason to suppose that this progress is directed towards a predetermined goal or destination. If absolute perfection already exists somewhere as an accomplished fact, then it would follow that man's sense of conscious pursuit and exertion in the direction of the enrichment of his being and the improvement of his lot on this earth are mere appearances.

Except for this belief in an already existent perfection or perfect being, Tagore's views about man's religion and his destiny exhibit an unmistakable humanistic bias. Thus, reflecting on the origin of the phenomenon of religion, he observes. 'He (i.e. man) has been building up elaborate religions to convince himself, against his natural inclinations, of the paradox that he is not what he is but something greater '[1] Man, according to Tagore, 'has a feeling that he is truly represented in something which exceeds himself.' (p. 36). Following the *Chhandogya Upanishad* he affirms that happiness coexists with greatness (vastness or amplitude) with the implication that finitude and smallness are inconsistent with genuine happiness or joyfulnees. In other words, man according to Tagore has a nisus towards the Infinite or the limitless, he has it in his nature to seek to exceed or supersede himself. This nisus or drive in man, in his view, is indicative of his being exposed to the presence of a Reality wherein the values cherished by him abide Identifying this Reality with eternal humanity or immortal Man Tagore reaches the following description of values. 'Our life', he says, 'gains what is called "Value" in those of its aspects which represent eternal humanity in knowledge, in sympathy, in deeds, in character and creative works.' From the begin-

[1]Ibid., p. 38.

ning of his history man has been seeking these values, sometimes at the cost of so-called worldly gains and successes This means, according to Tagore, that 'we are trying to realise in our selves the immortal Man, so that we may die but not perish.'[1] The values that man seeks constitute his Reality or his Truth which, in Tagore's philosophy, is hypostatized as God or Brahman.

Here we may pause to take note of a methodological problem. As a being involved with values man cherishes some attitudes towards life's central concerns and faith in the worthwhileness of certain ways of life, however, as a rational being he seeks to build a superstructure or system of beliefs to provide justification of those attitudes The point to be noted by theorists of human values is that *more than one set or system of beliefs may be used for supporting a given cluster of attitudes or scheme of values.* Thus one may exhort a person to speak truth and avoid violence towards his fellow-beings because untruth and violence are prohibited by scriptures of one or other religion or by God; alternatively, the person in question may be asked to refrain from telling lies and practising violence because these practices, in addition to causing inconvenience and pain to others, contribute to the imbalance and qualitative deterioration of his own personality. The first line of argument is theological and religious in the traditional sense; it may not appeal to modern, scientific mind unable to accept traditional systems of beliefs, the second way of persuasion is humanistic, which is more or less in agreement with such scientific disciplines as psychology It may be noted that Bertrand Russell's well-known work *The Conquest of Happiness* all along uses arguments of the second type to persuade its readers of the desirability of cultivating most of the traditional virtues and the harmfulness, in terms of the growth and happiness of the human personality, of encouraging hostile and uncharitable emotions and attitudes.

As a matter of fact Tagore the thinker stands midway between traditional idealism and modern humanism. On the one hand he insists, in the manner of the humanists, that the universe as known to us is a human universe; this implies that the God we believe in is one fashioned by man's own imagination and conceptual apparatus; on the other hand he is unable to shake off the

[1]Ibid , p. 90.

traditional belief in an ultimate ground or cause of the world. This belief seems to him to be necessary for sustaining our faith in the spiritual values He says:

> I believe in a spiritual world—not as anything separate from this world—but as its innermost truth. With the breath we draw we must always feel this truth that we are living in God. Born in this great world, full of the mystery of the infinite, we cannot accept our existence as a momentary outburst of chance drifting on the current of matter toward an eternal nowhere. We cannot look upon our lives as dreams of a dreamer who has no awakening in all time.[1]

Tagore feels that the values man cherishes and the ideals for which he (Tagore) himself stands and desires others to stand cannot be properly justified and defended except by the postulate of or belief in the spirituality of the world He is by no means insensitive to the problem of the presence of evil in that world, but his solution of the problem is the traditional one offered by idealistic and theistic thinkers the world over. Tagore is impatient with the propagandists of disillusionment and the prophets of doom

> We find in modern literature that something like a chuckle of an exultant disillusionment is becoming contagious, and the knights-errant of the cult of arson are abroad, setting fire to our time-honoured altars of worship, proclaiming that the images enshrined on them, even if beautiful, are made of mud. They say that it has been found out that the appearances in human idealism are deceptive, that the underlying mud is real.[2]

As regards the incidence of evil in the world, Tagore finds a facile way out along the lines made familiar by the apologists of orthodox religions:

> The question why there is evil in existence is the same as why there is imperfection, or in other words, why there is creation at all. We must take it for granted that it could not be

[1]Extract from *Personality, A Tagore Reader*, p 221.
[2]*Religion of Man*, p. 78

> otherwise; that creation must be imperfect, must be gradual, and that it is futile to ask the question, "why are we?". . . but this is the real question we ought to ask: is this imperfection the final truth, is evil absolute and ultimate?[1]

Tagore, of course, believes that imperfection and evil are not absolute; to him these are necessary obstacles in man's march towards perfection 'The wonder is not that there should be obstacles and sufferings in this world, but that there should be law and order, beauty and joy, goodness and love.'[2] According to Tagore what appears as imperfect is the manifestation of the perfect; the poet in him is tremendously impressed by the beauty of the world and the element of mystery in it

As already observed Tagore finds certain beliefs necessary as justifying and supporting the values and ideals he stands for. These may now be stated in brief

Tagore's conception of man links him to the divinity which is the underlying reality of the universe. This makes him a believer in the innate dignity and greatness of man. On the one hand, in Tagore's scheme of things, man is closely related to nature and so is required to seek satisfaction and happiness not so much in the conquest of nature as in cultivating living harmony with her. In fact, Tagore as a poet is a great lover of nature and his poetry abounds in nature imagery. But, on the other hand, he is not insensitive to man's superiority to nature. While nature is ruled by iron necessity, man is a free agent endowed with self-conscious creativity. Man is also gifted with the power of imagination—'the most distinctly human of all our faculties'[3]—which impels and enables him to exceed or supersede himself and to seek unity with the Supreme Person that constitutes the reality and truth of his being. This reality presents itself to us in different types of values. Says Tagore: 'Our life gains what is called "Value" in those of its aspects which represent eternal humanity in knowledge, in sympathy, in deeds, in character and creative works.' Here Tagore reproduces an utterance in an Upanishad which he translates thus: 'Realise the Person so that thou mayst not suffer from

[1]*A Tagore Reader*, p. 227
[2]Loc. cit
[3]*Religion of Man*, p. 33.

death.'[1] It may be remembered here that, according to Tagore, the values, for which the Supreme Person stands as a symbol, also constitute man's own essential being and truth. This quest of values makes up common essential core of different religions. 'These religions differ in details and often in their moral significance, but they have a common tendency. In them men seek their own supreme value, which they call divine, in some personality anthropomorphic in character '[2]

Tagore's identification of God or the Supreme Person with eternal or universal Man yields to him the ideal of human unity, which was one of the ruling ideas in his life and thought. Says Tagore: 'The truth that is infinite dwells in the ideal of unity which we find in the deeper relatedness.' Here Tagore quotes a sentence, probably from one of the Upanishads, and translates it in the following words: 'This infinite and eternal has to be known as One' [3]

Tagore is opposed to the philosophy of ascetic renunciation as traditionally understood for two distinct reasons. First, because, as a poet, he takes delight in the world of colours and sounds, smells etc., revealed by the senses. This sense of delight in the world sets him in opposition to the Advaitic doctrine of *Māyā* with its accent on the illusory character of things. In the second place, he repudiates the practice of renouncing the world of men and women and seeking union with God in the solitude of a mountain cave. In one his poems he affirms his desire to live in the human world in the following lines:[4]

"This world is sweet, I wish ne'er to depart; I long for a dwelling within humanity's heart."

In another poem he tells the spiritual aspirant desirous of worshipping God, to leave the temple and to learn to recognize God in the faces of his fellow-beings including the manual worker, the tiller of the hard ground and the path-maker breaking stones:

"Leave this chanting, and singing and telling thy beads.

[1]Ibid., p. 90.
[2]Ibid., p. 38.
[3]Ibid., p. 41.
[4]The poetic extracts have been taken from V S. Narvane's *Modern Indian Thought* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, reprinted 1967), pp. 150-51

Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple? Open thine eyes and see, thy God is not before thee. He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and the pathmaker is breaking stones . . .

* * * * *

Meet him and stand by him in toil and in the sweat of thy brow."

According to Tagore's interpretation of the ideal of human unity the individual fulfils himself by realising the possibilities inherent in the universal mind or the eternal Man It is by this process that the individual's personality grows and develops. This ideal of the growth and the fulfilment of man's personality sets the poet in opposition, on the one hand, to materialistic acquisitiveness of our industrial civilization and, on the other, to narrow and selfish forms of nationalism. For both the creed of material prosperity and the cult of nationalism tend to deflect men from the pursuit of their real goal and objective which is the realisation of their unity with the higher self of humanity or the man eternal, the repository of the values of truth, virtue and beauty. Nationalism leads one to think that the country is greater and has greater claim on a people than the ideals and the well-being of humanity as a whole Living as he did in a country enslaved by a foreign power Tagore was compelled to see how even a well-meaning people like the British, when driven by narrow self-interest, could perpetrate injustices of various sorts in lands conquered and ruled by them With their minds perverted by narrow self-interest masquerading as nationalism, Tagore ruefully observes, 'men who are naturally just can be cruelly unjust both in their act and in their thought accompanied by a feeling that they are helping the world to receive its deserts; men who are honest can blindly go on robbing others of their human rights for self-aggrandisement, all the while abusing the deprived for not deserving better treatment.'[1]

This is not to say that Tagore himself was not a nationalist in the sense that he did not love his country well enough. But his love for India was in no sense exclusive; that love did not require

[1]Mahendra Kulasrestha (ed), *Tagore Centenary Volume* (Hoshiarpur: Vishveshvaranand V R. Institute, 1961). 'Selections from Tagore,' p. 128.

him to sacrifice or even compromise his noble, humanistic ideal of human unity, nor did it lead him to hate the people or nations hostile to India In fact, his attachment to India was not bound by her geographical frontiers, the attachment was to the ideals and values for which India has stood through the centuries. As early as 1912 he wrote: 'I love India, not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography, not because I have had the chance to be born in her soil, but because she has saved through tumultous ages the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great sons.'[1]

Tagore's universalistic outlook and his uncompromising internationalism sometimes led him to be misunderstood by his countrymen who, in the heat of the struggle against the British, would even doubt his patriotic credentials. But, like his great predecessor Goethe, with whom this Indian sage and poet had much in common, he did not consent to sacrifice or even compromise his high ideals for the sake of vulgar applause and cheap popularity. With all his passionate concern for justice and for his country, Tagore sometimes felt repelled by the atmosphere of widespread hatred, as distinguished from the felling of just indignation, generated by Gandhi's well-meaning, non-violent struggle for Swaraj directed against the British. It was Tagore's persistent devotion to and espousal of the cause of the followship and unity of man and woman of the whole world that won him highest praise from like-minded writers and thinkers the world over. Both Tagore and Gandhi were greatly admired for their high pacifist ideals and their concern for humanity that cut across national boundaries by such like-minded thinkers and writers as Albert Einstein, Romain Rolland and Bernard Shaw. Count Keyserling paid a fitting tribute to Tagore when be said 'He is the most universal, the most encompassing human being I have met.'[2]

MAHATMA GANDHI (1869-1948)

Turning from Tagore to Gandhi is like proceeding from the clear stream at Gangotari to the turbulent Ganges overrunning

[1]Quoted in *A Tagore Reader*, p. 181.
[2]Quoted by Dr V.S. Narvane in his *Modern Indian Thought*, p. 116.

its banks and flooding a vast expanse of land during the rainy season. Tagore, like some of the venerated elderly characters in his novels—such as Paresh Babu in the *Gora*—was essentially a man of peace whose main concern and chief delight was the creative pursuit of literature and the arts and meditative contemplation of the beauties of nature under golden sunrise and silvery moonlight. His aversion to narrow chauvinistic nationalism and his advocacy of mutual understanding, unity and peace among nations derived largely from the perception that undisturbed pursuit of beauty and truth could not be carried on in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion, hatred and conflict among world communities. With his almost instinctive and total commitment to the philosophy of peaceful co-existence of the people of the earth Tagore came to embrace, early in his career, the philosophical world-view of the Upanishads in the version known as *Līlāvāda*, which makes the universe an expression of the sportive spirit of the Lord, Īśvara or Brahman. It is not recorded that, in his growth and development as thinker, Tagore ever passed through the stage of serious doubt or scepticism. Nor was he perturbed by the widespread phenomenon of evil present in the world being satisfied with the facile explanation of it made fashionable by various evolutionary creeds then in vogue. Tagore's genius, in fact, was largely speculative, ill at ease within the confines of the given or the experienced. Even as a poet and litterateur, he is prone to be carried away by his imagination and lacks the sure grasp of solid realities of life characteristic of such master writers as Shakespeare and Dante, Homer, Vyāsa and Vālmīki and even Kālidāsa.

Gandhi is no less an idealist than Tagore; he is an equally great, if not a greater, Vaishnava, and equally committed to the Vedāntic view of the unity of life However—and this is the great paradox of his life and personality—he is also a noteworthy realist, with his feet firmly planted in terrestrial reality. The difference between the two personages is due primarily to their preoccupation with different spheres of values. Tagore's involvement with arts and with speculative-philosophic religion was inimical to active participation by him in the pragmatic concerns and the economic and political conflicts of the times Contrary to this Gandhi's principal concern in life was securing justice to the weak and oppressed and to fight against the forces of injustice however powerful.

Now justice and injustice have reference mainly to the distribution of worldly goods, e.g. wealth and power and the freedom of self-determination in the pursuit of these and other utilitarian values. For this reason Gandhi could not be indifferent to the phases of life and the institutions related to the pursuit of those values.

However, it would be a misconception of Gandhian view of morality to see it as related only to the utilitarian dimension of man's life, individual and collective. In fact, there is a positive and a negative side of ethical life as conceived by Gandhi. On the negative side morality consists in action conforming to the demands of justice and in avoiding injustice; on the positive side moral or virtuous life involves extending love and service to the living beings. In its latter aspect moral life becomes one with spiritual discipline and so indistinguishable from religion.

Gandhi, in fact, tends to view life in its integral wholeness While according to the Vedānta all life is a unity in the ontological sense, according to Gandhi, as Acharya J.B. Kripalani perceptively remarks, 'human life as such is a synthetic whole which cannot be divided into separate, watertight compartments—religious, moral, political, economic, social, individual and collective' 'All the seemingly separate segments', Kripalani goes on to explain, 'are but different facets of man's life. They act and react upon one another ... There can be no problems that are purely moral, economic, political, social, individual or collective. They are inextricably intertwined.'[1] Dr S. Radhakrishnan likewise observes: '... for Gandhi, all life is of one piece.'[2] In our tradition this particular view of unity of man's life is frequently denied. Many a religious teacher here has seen and advocated a separation between so-called religious or spiritual life and life in the world. Partly, no doubt, this latter view gained currency from the traditional theory of four Āśramas or stages of life. But that theory was not so understood and interpreted by the authors of the manuals of law and social conduct (*Smṛities*), e.g. Manu. According to Manu

[1]*Gandhi, His Life and Thought* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Govt. of India, reprinted 1975), p. 305.

[2]S Radhakrishnan (ed.), *Mahatma Gandhi* (Essays and Reflections on His Life and Work) (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1975), p. 13.

the individual's entire life is morally oriented, and should be viewed as continual progress towards the ultimate fulfilment called *Moksha*. Manu, indeed, lays down strict moral discipline for the different stages of man's life. As a student the individual should eschew ease and comfort, serve his teacher, and, adhering strictly to the rule of celibacy, apply himself wholeheartedly to the study of the śāstras, or the acquisition of knowledge. As conceived by Manu, the life of the householder, too, involves strict moral discipline, and is dedicated almost wholly to the maintenance and service of all sections of the community In the third stage, that of Vānaprastha or life in the forest, the individual, generally accompanied by his wife, engages himself in reflection over the meaning of life and strives to cultivate detachment towards perishable material goods In the fourth stage, that of the Sannyāsin, the person lives to meditate on the Ātman or the ultimate reality and to preach higher morality and disseminate fundamentals of religious knowledge. The great Manu does not favour premature renunciation or withdrawal from social life with a view to pursuing *Moksha* or Salvation; his considered, psychologically sound advice is that, rather than jump over the intermediate stages, the individual should proceed from one Āśrama or stage to another in proper order. He even gives warning to the effect that, one who becomes an aspirant after *Moksha* before having discharged obligations attaching to earlier stages of life, will be in danger of sinking low or going down in the scale of spiritual excellence. In a similar vein the *Bhagavadgītā* discourages renunciation *of* action while recommending renunciation *in* action The main emphasis of the *Gītā*, however, is on the performance of one's prescribed duty without attachment to the fruits thereof. This teaching of *Nishkāma Karma* is also present in the *Manusmṛiti*. The *Gītā* (XVIII 46) also envisages attainment of *Moksha* by the individual through the discharge of his obligations or the performance of his duties undertaken in the spirit of the worship of the Supreme.

The point of these allusions to Manu and the *Gītā* is that the Vedic Indian tradition, at least in its main line of development, did not visualise a break or discontinuity between *Dharma* and *Moksha*, i.e. between moral life in society and the spiritual life, so-called, leading to the attainment of *Moksha* or metaphysical

perfection. There are a number of legends and stories in the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas about spiritually meritorious personages who attained the highest goal while living normal life in the world and discharging their special obligations. King Janaka is the best known of such legendary spiritual heroes. The *Mahābhārata* even mentions the case of a butcher, a Dharmavyādha, who continued in his occupation after he had attained the highest knowledge. Also there is the story of a housewife who, having been busy administering to the needs of her husband, kept a conceited ascetic waiting for alms. As for the other epic, *Rāmāyana,* it attaches the greatest importance to moral life and conduct so much so indeed that it does not even mention *Moksha* as an object or goal of life distinguishable from *Dharma*. Gandhi belongs to the line of these thinkers or teachers It may be remembered here that practically all the philosopher-teachers of the Upanishads were married persons some of whom sought to enter *Vānaprastha* and *Sannyāsa* stages after having lived with their spouses as householders.

However, it will be simplistic to assert that Gandhi followed one or other tradition to the letter. For one thing he had a highly complex personality and quite a complex character; the seeming simplicity of his life was due to the fact that he tried to regulate it by fairly rigid rules and principles. But the categorical imperatives that seemingly ruled his life and actions ultimately derived from impulses, moral-spiritual and emotional, that did not always operate in harmony with one another A strict disciplinarian in appearance who would chastise his closest followers and disciples for their smallest lapses, he was deeply human within; he could not be prevented from attending to the troubles of the Ashramites or to his patients even when involved in discussions and controversies of great moment.

The complexity of Gandhi's mind and character has been noted by some of his associates and quite a few observers of his life and activities. Acharya J.B. Kriplani reports that Gandhi started with disbelief in God and prayer, and that it was at later stage in his life that he came to believe in these. His faith in God increased as time went on; his yearning for prayer increased with that faith.[1] Swami Vivekananda, too, we are told, had been a sceptic

[1]Op. cit., p. 342.

in his college days. Now scepticism is a sure sign of a complex mind; when conjoined with the impulse of earnest inquiry, it generally contributes to originality and depth in a person's thought. The complexity of Gandhi's personality is also attested by his rather unusual kind of autobiography, described by him as "my experiments with truth." It is surprising that the most important autobiography produced in modern India and perhaps in the whole range of Indian literature, ancient and modern, should have been produced by Gandhi and not by a litterateur The reason probably is that, given the background of pseudo-idealism and hypocrisy that constitutes the cultural milieu of modern India, our writers find it difficult to produce genuine autobiographies. Only a man of Gandhi's character and courage, with passionate concern to seek and tell the truth, could have produced a record of his life worthy to rank with the best productions in the genre.

It is a measure of Gandhi's complexity that he should have been seen and characterized in radically different ways by different observers. Prof. Ernest Barker saw in him a combination of St. Francis vowed to the simple life of poverty, 'in harmony with all creation and in love with all created things,' St. Thomas Aquinas, 'the thinker and philosopher able to sustain high argument and to follow the subtleties of thought in all its windings,' and practical man of affairs with the background of legal training who could guide transactions with shrewd advice. More complicated than most of us, Prof Barker concludes, Gandhi had 'a rich and intricate personality.'[1] So complex and manysided is Gandhi's personality and achievement that Rev. John Haynes Holmes of the Community Church, New York, feels inclined to class him with such diverse types of great leaders of men and teachers of humanity as Wallace, Washington, Lafayette, Lincoln, etc., on the one hand and Laotse, Buddha, Zoroaster and Jesus on the other [2]

Dr. Zakir Husain has asserted that Gandhiji was 'one of the most rational thinkers, he had come across and that he had not known any man of that greatness who welcomed discussion as much as he did.'[3] In spite of this Vincent Sheean finds the pheno-

[1]S Radhakrishnan (ed.), *Mahatma Gandhi* (Essays and Reflections on His Life and Work), p. 49.

[2]Ibid , pp. 89-90

[3]*Thinking of Gandhi* (Bombay: Orient Longmans Ltd., 1957), pp. 15, 22.

menon of Gandhi historically unintelligible. 'There is no other case known to us, so runs his baffled comment, 'in which every fact is known and yet their sum amounts to an unknown.'[1] The thought of Mahatma Gandhi, though seemingly simple, is no less complex than his personality, and no easier to comprehend than his life. In the following brief account of that thought attempt will be made to trace it to the deeper roots in man's moral and social constitution and to work out its humanistic implications. Here it may be remembered, in the first place, that a great and complex thinker inevitably lends himself to more than one interpretation; and secondly, that no student or interpreter can transcend the limitations imposed by his own aptitudes and sympathies and by his capacity to see and comprehend the personality and thought under study.

Was Gandhi a rational thinker? An answer to this question would obviously depend on what we understand by rationality. A good deal of misconception prevails as to the meaning and significance of the terms 'reason' and 'rationality'. Often these are supposed to stand for some sort of opposition to intuition and empiricism on the one hand and to dogmatism and dogmatic temper on the other. Reason is also taken to be the faculty of seeing and establishing interconnections among concepts; likewise rationality is taken to imply readiness and power to see and abide by the implications of principles or premises previously accepted. Now Gandhi may be fitly described as a rationalist in the last sense. He was not a system-building thinker in the sense popular among theoreticians of all sorts, but he was a rational or a systematic thinker in a limited sense and in a special field, i.e the field of moral-religious values. Having accepted as axiomatic or self-evident the principles of truth and non-violence, he worked out and accepted for practice their implications to the minutest detail. The Indian religious tradition was already rich in the discussion particularly of *Ahimsa*, it had also laid stress on the virtues of truthfulness, nonstealing, celibacy (*Brahmacharya*) and what Gandhi calls non-possession (*Aparigraha*). But, as careful scholars of the tradition may readily see, Gandhi has been able to impart

[1]*Mahatma Gandhi, A Great Life in Brief* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 1968), pp. 1, 3.

richer meanings to almost all these concepts. For instance, Gandhi considers even the body to be a possession, and he thinks that we cannot practise total *Ahimsa* so long as we have a body and are required to administer to its needs. One comes across such subtle distinctions every now and then in Gandhi's writings, which fact assures him a place among the greatest philosophers and teachers of morality and religion. Even here Gandhi is noteworthy more for the subtlety of his *perceptions* and his capacity for seeing or making fine *distinctions* than for the ability to furnish rational basis to his fundamental first principles. These latter he seems to accept very much in the manner and spirit of the mathematicians accepting Euclid's axioms. In particular I find his loose thinking about the concepts, 'Sat' and 'Satya' to be extremely confusing and, of course, altogether unconvincing. Traditionally, *Sat* has been employed as an ontological category while the term *Satya* stands for empirical or logical truth on the one side and for the virtue of truthfulness on the other side. As for the precept of *Ahimsa*, which is conceived both negatively as forbidding injury to living beings and positively as doing good to them in Yoga literature, and includes the Christian injunction to love one's neighbour—rather, love and do service to humanity—in Gandhian thought, it is incapable for any rigorous proof, metaphysical or otherwise. The only truth or validity it can claim is its power to appeal to or fascinate man's mind and sensibility.

Gandhi may be taken to be a rational person in yet another sense; he refuses to accept any authority uncritically He is inclined to trust more his conscience and his reason than an authority whose pronouncements are repugnant to the former. Defining his attitude towards Hindu Scriptures he says:

> My belief in the Hindu Scriptures does not require me to accept every word and every verse as divinely inspired. . . I decline to be bound by any interpretation, however learned it may be, if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense.[1]

Gandhi was critical and reasonable enough to believe that, so far as their sanctity and acceptability is concerned, the scriptures

[1]Quoted by Romain Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: Publications Division: Government of India, reprinted 1976), p. 18.

of the major world religions were more or less on the same footing. Therefore, Gandhi could not believe 'in the exclusive divinity of Vedas.' He believed the Bible, the Koran and the Zend Avesta 'to be as divinely inspired as the Vedas' On the other hand he did not feel bound 'to accept every word and every verse' in the Hindu scriptures as divinity inspired.[1]

Here is another statement of his attitude towards scriptures:

> I exercise my judgement about every scripture including the Gita. I cannot let a scriptural text supersede my reason. While I believe that principal books are inspired, they suffer from a process of double distillation. Firstly, they come through a human prophet, and then through the commentaries of interpreters Nothing in them comes from God directly.[2]

Gandhi is reflective enough to know that the limitations of the person and the language he uses affect the character of the message believed to come from God. Romain Rolland quotes another significant statement of Gandhi which the latter rightly supposes to represent the Hindu tradition. 'I believe implicitly in the Hindu aphorism that none truly knows the *Shastras* who has not attained perfection in Innocence . . . and who has not renounced all acquisition and possession of wealth' (p. 19). The idea is that moral purity is a prerequisite of the understanding of religious truth.

Śaṅkarāchārya, indeed, lays down four conditions as prerequisites of the study of the Vedānta. These include the attitude of detachment towards the pleasures of this world and the next as also complete control over the senses and the mind Gandhi's emphasis on moral purity for the understanding of religious truth is an important supplement to his critical and rational attitude towards religious authority However, inasmuch as, in virtue of his being a public figure, he has to deal with men in society, that attitude has greater relevance to the student of his life and thought. In this connection one more statement of his which sums up

[1]Loc. cit.

[2]Bharatan Kumarappa (ed.), *My Religion* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1955), p. 22.

his views about diverse religious traditions may be quoted here:

> After long study and experience, I have come to the conclusion that (1) all religions are true, (2) all religions have some error in them, (3) all religions are almost as dear to me as my own Hinduism ... therefore no thought of conversion is possible.[1]

The main point about Gandhian view of religion, from whatever side we look at it, is its total relevance for man's social life and behaviour. Gandhi recommended and exemplified in his life the typically Hindu attitude of willing tolerance towards diversity of religious belief and practice. Unlike orthodox followers of different religions Gandhi, though a man of deep faith, is not prepared to be exclusive in his loyalties. In this respect he represents a modern and scientific outlook. Indeed, if it is possible for a religious man to be scientific in his thinking, then Gandhi was one Though intensely religious, he yet belonged to the scientific age. As such he believes that what is 'beyond reason is surely not unreasonable. Unreasonable belief is blind faith and is often superstition.'[2]

GANDHI'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

Gandhi knew that the laws discovered by science are mere hypotheses which cannot be strictly proved. The existence of God, too, does not admit of strict proof. Therefore, Gandhi suggested that: 'My suggestion, therefore, to you is not to argue about the existence of divinity, just as you do not argue about your own existence, but simply assume like Euclid's axioms that God is . .' (Ibid., p. 20). Gandhi also appealed to the testimony of numerous saints like Chaitanya, Ramakrishna, Tuka Ram, Nanak, Kabir, etc., who affirmed the existence of God. In his *Autobiography* he makes a curious statement or confession as to how and in what sense he believes in God. He says.

> I have made the world's faith in God my own, and as my faith is ineffaceable I regard that faith as amounting to

[1]Shriman Narayan (ed.), *The Voice of Truth* (Ahmedabad. Navajivan Publishing House, 1969), p. 269.
[2]*The Supreme Power*, A T. Hingorani (ed.), (Bombay· Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1963), p. 36.

experience. However, as it may be said that to describe faith as experience is to temper with truth, it may perhaps be more correct to say that I have no word for characterizing my belief in God.[1]

One great obstacle to belief in God is the presence of evil in the world. Gandhi is no more able to explain the phenomenon of evil than other idealistic and religious philosophers But he is humble enough to confess to his ignorance or incapacity to account for the incidence of evil in the universe. He says:

I cannot account for the existence of evil by any rational method . . . I am therefore humble enough to recognise evil as such. And I call god long suffering and patient precisely because He permits evil in the world. (*My Religion*, p. 36).

Gandhi's reference to suffering God reminds us of William James' conception of God as finite, who needs our cooperation in combating evil. This view is also suggested by religious mythologies admitting Satan as a power antagonistic to God or his designs.

Here it should be noted that Gandhi speaks about God with different voices on different occasions In the first place he commends and uses the entire Vaishnava terminology in speaking of God, secondly, he talks in the vein of an Advaitist, conceiving God as world-ground and continuous with man's Ātman; lastly, vehemently denying personality to Godhead, he tends to view Him or It as an impersonal force or law equatable to the urge within man to seek higher life in the ethics of love and service, penance and sacrifice. I hold that this third way of speaking alone represents the view that Gandhi developed through his own reflective thinking. I also believe that this way of thinking is very close to the humanist mode of thought and should be acceptable to even radicals among the humanists.

The following passages from extensive Gandhi literature represent various strains in his thinking about God.[2]

[1]Quoted by N.K. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press; Second Edition, reprinted 1972), p. 3.

[2]Shriman Narayan (ed.), *The Voice of Truth* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1969).

(a1) God is not some person outside ourselves or away from the universe. He pervades everything, and is omniscient as well as omnipotent He does not need my praise or petitions. Being immanent in all beings, He hears everything and reads our innermost thoughts He abides in our hearts and is nearer to us than the nails are to the fingers. (p. 101).

(a2) He is the greatest democrat the world knows, for he leaves us 'unfettered' to make our own choice between evil and good. He is the greatest tyrant ever known, for he often dashes the cup from our lips and under cover of free will leaves us a margin so wholly inadequate as to provide only mirth for himself at our expense. Therefore it is that Hinduism calls it all His sport—*Lila*, or calls it all an illusion—*Maya*. We are *not*, He alone *Is*. (p. 101).

(a3) There in an indefinable mysterious Power that pervades everything. . . I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever-dying, there is underlying all that change a Living Power that creates, dissolves, and recreates. . . this power I see it as purely benevolent. For I can see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light He is love. He is the Supreme Good. (pp. 103-4).

(b1) To me God is Truth and love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. (p. 102).

(b2) 'I understand God to be universal Law. . . . God is the law as well as the Law-giver The two are one. In Buddhism God is described as the Law.'[1] 'If you can think of Law without its giver', he observed, 'I would say that the Law is the Law-giver, that is God. When we pray to Law, we simply yearn after knowing the Law and obeying it'. (ibid , p. 14).

Gandhi's original contribution towards defining God is contained in the last two passages. Gandhi seems to be struggling to

[1]A.T. Hingorani (ed.), *The Supreme Power*, p. 16.

frame a new conception of God. Being a pioneering attempt in a new direction, his description of God lacks the firmness of a well-conceived idea. Clearly, he could not get much help from traditional religions in clarifying the new, intuitive notion or notions to himself and to others. It may be noted here that the conception of God as Law has something to do with the popularity and significance of the scientific conception of the Laws of nature. Gandhi seems to think that the so-called moral and spiritual values and ideals act as forces in man's life comparable to forces active in the domain of nature. But Gandhi overlooks here the commonplace distinction made by philosophers and socio-political thinkers between the positive laws of nature and the normative laws of morality and those enforced by the state. As against the positive natural laws, the normative laws can be violated. Gandhi tacitly admits this fact when he speaks of praying to the Law identified with God. But the suggestion is anomalous, if not fantastic. We cannot pray to a Law, nor can that ambiguous entity respond to our prayer. This is not the place to discuss in detail the nature of the so-called positive laws of science supposed to regulate the course of nature. However, two things may be noted in connection with these laws. First, no law of nature can claim to have received final or definitive formulation at the hands of the scientists: all laws are subject to re-statement and reformulation in the light of revised theoretical superstructure of a science. Secondly, the scientific laws seem to become less and less compulsive as we move from the sphere of the macrocosm to that of microcosm in physical nature on the one hand, and from the domain of the physical phenomena to those of the plant world, the animal world and the realm of psychological and socio-historical phenomena on the other. These classes of phenomena seem to constitute a hierarchy with progressive relaxation ih the determining or regulative role of the principles or laws, so-called, regarded as governing them It seems to us that the higher a phenomenon or being stands in its organised functioning, the more numerous are the laws or principles underlying its behavioral peculiarities and its vicissitudes. If follows that man, the most highly organised and complex being in virtue of his multiple nature expressing itself at different levels of action and response, is subject to a variety of laws, better described as drives and

impulses attended with different degrees of consciousness, that are not reducible to a common denominator. Among the impulses implanted in man by his evolutionary history are the so-called moral and spiritual urges and aspirations united with his power of imagination, these latter impulses make him a restless creature given to visualising and striving to reach ever higher and more complex forms of moral-spiritual life, individual and collective.

This explanation of the normative impulses and aspirations of man, it is submitted, can enable us to achieve a more coherent understanding of Gandhi's several important intuitions, and accounts, of the Supreme Spiritual Power which, using the traditional idiom, he is driven to describe as God An important thing about man's higher impulses is that they may be both weakened and strengthened by the individual's self-effort or will. What Gandhi calls prayer is addressed, so to say, to one's own better self—which may be called the conscience, the true self or the Truth abiding within oneself. It is a patent fact that human beings, grown complex by the acquisition of culture and the inheritance of one or several spiritual traditions, tend to be driven in their actions by conflicting motives. These motives are submitted to moral assessment by their fellow-beings and even by themselves In the case of a conflict between higher and lower motives, a conscientious person may evoke his God to give him the strength to follow the higher motive. Gandhi believes that this God is in some sense present in our own being. Here it may be remembered that Gandhi sometimes refers to God as the suffering God. The concept of a suffering God is obviously inconsistent with the conception of God as omnipotent, i e. as all-powerful creator of the universe. Properly speaking the Gandhian conception of God has no room for attributing creatorship to him as traditionally understood.

Gandhi's change over from the assertion 'God is Truth' to 'Truth is God' is another indication that he gradually ceased to consider creatorship to be an essential function of Godhead. The power that God was supposed to have over man was of the nature of the compulsion exercised by a normative impulse or law. Thus, God might be described as the Law of Love. In other contexts Gandhi described *Ahimsa* to be the Law of Life, he also identified *Ahimsa* with love. The belief that truth and non-violence cons-

tituted the law or laws of human life made Gandhi an optimist. He said: 'All well-constructed societies are based on the law of non-violence. I have found that life persists in the midst of destruction. . and, therefore, there must be a higher law than that of destruction. . . and, if that is the Law of Life, we have to work it out in daily life.'[1] He defended his optimism in the following words:

> The Law of Love, call it attraction, affinity, cohesion, if you like, governs the world. Life persists in the face of death. The universe continues in spite of destruction incessantly going on. Truth triumphs over untruth. Love conquers hate. God eternally triumphs over Satan. (ibid., p. 9).

Gandhi's defence of an optimistic view of life, it will be seen, is very different from that traditionally offered by idealistic and theistic thinkers. The fact is that Gandhi the thinker habitually moves close to man's day-to-day experience. The facts that he invokes in support of his ideas are such as are accessible to everybody. In this sense his thought was rooted in the common experience of humanity. Also Gandhi may be called a pragmatic thinker and moralist in the sense that his most important ideas were intended to be put in practice.

If Ahimsa or Love is the overriding principle of life, then how would Gandhi account for all the violence exhibited in the history of mankind? Gandhi was not upset by the violent struggles that have marked history throughout the centuries; to him these were mere aberrations of man's collective life His philosophy of history led him to believe that, in the last analysis, it is love that prevails over hatred, nonviolence over violence.

> I claim that even now, though the social structure is not based on a conscious acceptance of non-violence, all the world over mankind lives and men retain their possessions on the sufferance of one another. If they had not done so, only the fewest and the most ferocious would have survived. But such is not the case. Families are bound together by ties of love, and so are groups in the so-called civilised society called

[1]*The Law of Love*, A T. Hingorani (ed.) (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, second edition, 1962), p. 1.

nations. Only they do not recognise the supremacy of the law of non-violence [1]

It is noteworthy that Gandhi propounded his optimistic philosophy of history at a time when most of European thinkers were inclined to strike a pessimistic note. The way Gandhi argued for his optimism is also indicative of his high calibre as a thinker. He said:

I believe that the sum total of the energy of mankind is not to bring us down but to lift us up, and that is the result of the definite, if unconscious, working of the law of love. (ibid., p 21).

He believed that human society was 'a ceaseless growth, an unfoldment in terms of spirituality.' (ibid., p. 22). However, it was not to be supposed that progress in history was automatic, brought about by an inexorable law of necessity. For this reason Gandhi pleaded for conscious adoption of non-violence and truth by man in his life. It was in consequence of such adoption that Gandhi felt impelled to invent and put to use his unique weapon of Satyagraha for fighting injustice and in defence of what he considered to be just claims and righteous causes.

There have been a number of saints in Indian history who practised *Ahimsa* to the fullest degree in their individual lives. Others, too, have believed that the saint should pursue the spiritual goal in cloistered solitude, avoiding the company of men and women particularly the latter. Still others continue to be of opinion that non-violence cannot regulate the relations among groups, classes and nations, with conflicting material interests. In regard to all these matters Gandhi, the uncompromising apostle of non-violence and truth, held radically different views. He did not concede the saint's right to withdraw from the world. He said:

I do not believe that the spiritual law works on a field of its own. On the contrary, it expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the economic, the social and the political fields. (ibid., p. 24).

[1]N.K. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi*, p. 23.

Gandhi believed human life to be an undivided whole in the sense that no line could be drawn between its different forms and expressions, e.g ethics and politics. Furthermore, it was his firm belief that non-violence could be practised by all men and women. Claiming to be a practical idealist, and not a mere visionary, he asserted that the religion of non-violence was not meant merely for the Rishis and saints. To him non-violence was the 'Law of our species, as violence is the Law of the Brute.'[1] Gandhi demonstrated the soundness of these views by conducting mass movements in Satyagraha that won acclaim of discerning political observers the world over. His major Satyagraha campaigns were as well-organised and well-conducted as some of the military campaigns of such celebrated generals as Alexander and Napoleon.

Satyagraha, as conceived by Gandhi, is non-violence in action. As such it is based on the refusal to do harm to him against whom it is directed. As a votary of truth, the Satyagrahi soldier places all his cards on the table, keeping nothing secret. Another fundamental element in Satyagraha is that of conscious suffering *Ahimsa* being the law of love, it consists not in claiming but in giving. 'Love ever suffers, never resents, never revenges itself.' 'The test of love is tapasya and tapasya means self-suffering.'[2]

Joan V. Bondurant finds it difficult to account for the tremendous hold and influence that Gandhi came to have over the Indian people She thinks that Gandhi exemplified the charismatic leader in many ways, though he did not quite satisfy the description of a typical charismatic personality given by the great sociologist Max Weber. A charismatic leader generally claims to be an extraordinary person, a prophet or a messenger of God who deserves to be adored and obeyed unconditionally. Contrary to this Gandhi repeatedly denied having any charismatic qualification. 'I lay claim to nothing exclusively divine in me,' he declared in 1924, adding: 'I do not claim prophetship.'[3] Gandhi did not want to encourage superstition in the country—it already had enough of it. And he had 'a horror of adoration' He stated that he was an erring mortal like others. In spite of all these disclaimers he came to be looked upon as a Mahatma by millions

[1]*The Voice of Truth*, p 156
[2]Quoted by Joan V Bondurant in *Conquest of Violence*, p. 26.
[3]Quoted by Joan V. Bondurant, ibid., p 124.

his countrymen, and by a large number of highly educated intellectuals. Gandhi's admitted greatness does not lend itself to simple analysis and explanation. On the one hand Gandhi refused to separate, like the Prophet of Islam, the political from the spiritual; on the other he exemplified in a superlative degree two great virtues of a typical Indian saint—complete detachment towards and renunciation of worldly goods, and total conquest of the sentiments of *rāga* and *dvesha*, passionate attachment and hatred. In addition to being absolutely selfless, Gandhi appeared to the people to be a true Karmayogi devoted wholly to their service. In the conditions then prevailing in the country, when people saw no way out from the state of subjection and slavery under the mighty British Raj, Gandhi seemed to people to be a Saviour and Avatar, a veritable embodiment of fearless courage and indomitable will to resist the evil of injustice. There can be no doubt that the virtue of supreme courage coupled with unshakeable faith and confidence in the final triumph of the just cause of his people and country endowed his personality with charismatic charm and power. That personality seemed to mark the most marvellous combination of moral and spiritual forces ever witnessed by history.

In his important work *Non-violence and Aggression* with the subtitle "A Study of Gandhi's Moral Equivalent of War" Prof H J.N. Horsburgh brings out the humanistic aspects of Satyagraha as contrasted with traditional ways of armed conflict or warfare Successful conduct of war involves, on the one hand, suppression of the virtues of kindness, friendliness, forgiveness and consideration for the sufferings of fellow humans, and, on the other, the encouragement of the feelings of unqualified hatred, anger and hostility towards the so-called enemy or enemies. The state of war leads to total violation of the liberal-democratic principle of "respect for persons" and that of the "dignity of the individual." Imagine the liability to moral blinding and degeneration of the soldiers fed on such slogans as 'the only good German is dead German.'[1]

As contrasted with the participants in armed conflict the Gandhian Satyagrahi, for whom resistance to injustice or evil is an obli-

[1]*Non-violence and Aggression* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. '5-16

gation or duty—'a moral debt which is owed to his opponent as well as to himself'—shows his respect for his opponents by addressing moral appeals to them and expecting them to be responsive to those appeals.[1]

Satyagraha cannot, and therefore should not, be used in an unjust cause. It aims not at coercion but at conversion of the opponent, at opening his eye to the injustice of the situation to which he is a party. This is sought to be achieved not by inflicting suffering on the opponent, but through self-suffering; such suffering is calculated to open the eyes of the understanding.[2] Gandhi's Satyagraha, as expounded by the Master, is 'gentle, non-wounding and never associated with anger or malice.'[3] Satyagraha 'aims at winning over a man by the power of love and gentle persuasion and by arousing in him a sense of justice rather than forcing him to submit out of fear and embarrassment.'[4]

While Mahatma Gandhi professed belief in the Advaita Vedānta that proclaims unity of all living beings, the moral and humanistic grandeur of Satyagraha as a method of resolving conflicts and securing justice may be appreciated by persons sceptical or suspicious in regard to metaphysical speculations. Says Bondurant: 'Gandhi repeatedly assured non-believers that Satyagraha did not require a man to declare a religious faith.' She quotes Gandhi's reply to an objection regarding the wording of the Satyagraha-pledge, which began 'with God as witness, I . . .', in 1925 He said:

> 'So far as the conscientious objection [to the use of the 'God as witness' declaration] is concerned the mention of God may be removed from the congress pledge . . .[5]

The appeal of the method of Satyagraha, involving as it does faith in the inherent goodness and good sense of the opponent, coupled with goodwill towards and readiness to come to an understanding and compromise with him, is purely moral and humanistic. While an armed conflict, even when resulting in Pyrrhic

[1]Ibid., p. 29.
[2]Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi* (London & Dublin: Curzon Press, 1982), p. 51.
[3]Ibid., p. 50.
[4]Ibid., pp. 50-51.
[5]*Conquest of Violence*, p. 128.

victory for one side, involves humiliation and defeat of the weaker party, Satyagraha aims at settlement with the opponent without causing any psychological injury to him.

In the *Bhagavadgītā* Lord Krishna states that whenever, in one or other age, *Dharma* or the order of righteousness suffers decline, and the forces of unrighteousness or injustice become preponderant. He incarnates himself in embodied form. Lord Krishna, however, while he counselled Arjuna to fight without anger, was no advocate of non-violent struggle—it may be remembered though that he himself refused to use arms during the Mahābhārata war. A prophet of non-violence, which fact gave him added distinction, Gandhi appeared to be every inch a Saviour or Avatar particularly to the Indian people. A distinctive mark of the Saviour is that, having no problem of his own to tackle, he seems to live and act solely for others, i.e. the weak and the oppressed. The circumstance that Gandhi, as a leader, acted the part of a Saviour and that, in the first place, in respect of the nation as a whole needing deliverance from foreign yoke; and, in the second place, in respect of the disinherited and the oppressed of the country including poorer sections of the peasantry and the untouchables, invested him with the halo of a heroic Deliverer. But this charismatic or the Saviour's role of the Mahatma was an accident of history. What the Gandhian *theory* of Satyagraha required for its conduct and success was determined, even aggressive, resistance to forces of injustice by individuals of high moral calibre. Gandhi did not attach much importance to the number of non-violent resisters; what counted with him was the courage, determination and the moral quality of the persons offering the resistance.

We shall now attempt to highlight the humanistic elements in Gandhi's thought and his philosophy of action. We have already indicated how Gandhi's God is equatable with the higher spiritual impulses innate in the human constitution. Man is more than merely a physical body or a biological organism Drawn irresistibly towards the values of Goodness and Justice and urged by his creative nature to pursue the values in question, man cannot help professing them before his fellowmen and recognising them in his conscience. This accounts for the fact that even those wielding power and authority dare not openly avow their selfish motives, being

constrained to explain their actions and policies in terms of reasonable aims and intentions Thus, the British rulers could not openly disavow democracy in their dealings with the Indian nationalists. The Gandhian Satyagraha tended to expose the hypocritical elements concealed behind the diplomatic language and behaviour of the unjust British rulers. Viewed in this light Satyagraha appears as a potent weapon against injustice supported by even highly armed authority The weapon is moral in the sense that its success depends, not on superior fighting capacity accompanied by superior armed strength, but on awakening the adversary to the injustice or immorality of his stand thereby undermining his morale and self-confidence. A well-conducted campaign of Satyagraha, absolutely untouched by violence in word or deed, made the hypocritical opponent suffer from split personality, his own moral self getting alarmed by the exposure of the ugliness or indecency of his designs and his behaviour, Gandhi does not agree with the precept, 'resist not evil'; on the contrary, he would have us resist evil even at the risk of our lives—but only with moral means, with truth and non-violence, and not with unfair and evil methods This is Gandhi's moral idealism, this is also his religion or religious idealism Having observed that Gandhi offered to the world a moral substitute for war, Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, commented on his contribution in the following words: 'He has lifted politics from the plane of sophistication and untruths where at its worst it degenerated into low intrigue and at its highest could not rise beyond diplomatic circumlocutions and secret diplomacy, to the pitch of a high idealism in which the end, however noble, can in no circumstances justify recourse to means which are not pure and immaculate '[1]

Gandhi's great contribution to humanism consists in conceiving a religion that centres almost wholly around man and his life here in this world. He did not distinguish between life temporal and life eternal. Religion, according to him, should pervade all our activities; it cannot and ought not to be pursued in seclusion from one's fellow-beings and in separation from life's other activities. As we observed earlier Gandhi talks about God with several voices, on most of the occasions he speaks of God almost like a

[1]S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 192.

traditional Vaishnava, which brings him in line with followers of such monotheistic creeds as Christianity and Islam. For in Vaishnavism proper, with its emphasis on one-pointed (*ekāntika*) devotion to Vishṇu or his incarnations, especially Rāma and Krishna, there is hardly any room for the worship of several gods or goddesses. The *Gītā* itself (vide, VII.23) discourages worship of divinities other than Krishna or Vishnu However, as a rational thinker Gandhi explicates his notion of God in an entirely novel way, identifying God, as we have seen, with Truth, Conscience, Moral Law and the like. What can it mean to pray to such a God ? And can one *change* the Divine mind by one's prayer ? In replying to this question, put forward by a Buddhist, Dr. Fabri, Gandhi said:

> It is a difficult thing to explain fully what I do when I pray. But I must try to answer your question. The Divine Mind is unchangeable but that Divinity is in everyone and everything animate and inanimate. The meaning of prayer is that I want to evoke that Divinity within me [1]

We have dwelt at length with Gandhi's view of religion because it lies at the centre of his whole life, his thought and his activities. Another important constituent of Gandhian humanism is his respect for and faith in the individual. To him the individual alone is real; the society and the state have little meaning apart from the individual. The individual is the vehicle of spiritual endeavour and growth, he stands in the centre of all social progress. This is not to deny that man is essentially a social being. The individual should adjust his activities to the requirements of social progress All the same Gandhi would not countenance the curtailment of the individual's freedom on the plea of higher needs of the state. As against Christianity subscribing to the dogma of original sin, Gandhi, like Vivekananda, is a staunch believer in the divinity and the innate goodness of man. This belief, indeed, is central to his theory and practice of Satyagraha. The belief, again, makes him take an optimistic view of human history However, progress both individual and social depends, in the last analysis, on the strivings and exertions of the individuals in the right direction. Thus the individual

[1]*My Religion*, p. 96.

to him becomes 'the one supreme consideration.'[1] 'It would not be extravagant,' says Prof. Iyer, 'to consider Gandhi as one of the most revolutionary of individualists and one of the most individualistic of revolutionaries in world history.'[2] But the ideal individual of Gandhi has no resemblance to Nietzsche's Superman. The German philosopher is an admirer and advocate of the Will to Power, his superman has scant regard for the Christian virtues of meekness and humility and the moral ideals of the common people Contrary to this, Gandhi attaches the greatest importance to moral consciousness and conscience. The man of conscience is also highly conscientious, he 'hesitates to assert himself, he is always humble, never boisterous, always compromising, always ready to listen, ever willing, even anxious, to admit mistakes.'[3] The superior man of Gandhi's conception is driven by the desire to serve mankind, offering protection to the weak and oppressed; he has little use for wealth and power, even name and influence, regarded as ends in themselves.

Gandhi's concern for the individual's freedom and dignity made him suspicious of the authority and power of the state, and an advocate of decentralisation in the administrative set-up. He says: 'I look upon an increase in the power of the state with the greatest fear, because . . . it does the greatest harm to the mankind by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress '[4] Gandhi, however, was fully alive to the fact of man's being essentially social. The individual, according to him, fulfils himself by serving the group His concept of service has a moral and not merely economic significance. His ideal of service, again, underlines two important facts: first, the fact that man is essentially social, and second, that the exercise of virtue is possible only in society or social existence. Therefore Gandhi, who identifies religion with the practice of virtue, does not approve of the ideal of renouncing the world in the pursuit of personal salvation. In the religious philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi one finds a meeting of the extremes, particularly in his conception of the importance and role of the

[1]Raghvan N Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 114.

[2]Loc. cit.

[3]Quoted by R.N. Iyer, ibid., p. 121.

[4]N K. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi*, p. 26.

individual. Almost all the religions conceive the individual to be the locus and beneficiary of spiritual progress, thereby recognising the dignity and worth of the individual person or his soul. Gandhi shares this view of the individual person and his destiny. He even suggests on occasions that man's ultimate fulfilment consists in attaining *Moksha* or permanent association with God; but he departs from the traditional religions in believing the fulfilment to be possible only through social action or social service Again, belief in the spiritual constitution of man leads him to affirm absolute equality of all human beings—the equality, of course, of souls and not bodies. To Gandhi equality is a mental state which is to be realised 'in the midst of . . apparent external inequality.' In particular the assumption of superiority by any person over any other is in his view 'a sin against God and man '[1]

Dilating on this point in another context he says:

> How can there be room for distinctions of high and low where there is this all-embracing fundamental unity underlying the outward diversity? For that is a fact meeting you at every step in daily life. The final goal of all religions is to realize this essential oneness.[2]

This belief in equality leads Gandhi to discard the caste system as it exists in today's India; it also leads him to reject the Varna theory as generally understood. To him a Brahmin has no inherent superiority over a Śūdra. The division of men into four Varnas is based strictly on differences in the temperaments, inclinations and capacities for different sorts of work present in different persons. Despite these differences, however, Gandhi commended and even enjoined "bread labour" for all members of society Again, Gandhi advocated more or less equal wages for all kinds of work. These strains in his thought made him a champion of economic democracy no less than political and spiritual or moral democracy.

[1]Quoted in *Conquest of Violence*, pp. 168, 169.
[2]*The Voice of Truth*, p 269.

CHAPTER 4

Secularist Humanism: M.N. Roy and Jawaharlal Nehru

MOST of the leaders who shaped and influenced the course of Hindu Renaissance from Ram Mohan Roy onwards were religious personages. Mahatma Gandhi, who led the struggle for India's independence for over twenty years, was looked upon as a saint by the Indian people. Indeed, probably for the first time in history, he linked politics to religion and gave a religious complexion to that struggle. Gandhi's magnetic personality, however, was able to draw into the orbit of his influence and in the peculiar non-violent contest for freedom men and women of differing temperaments and divergent beliefs and ideologies Jawaharlal Nehru, for instance, had far-reaching differences with the Mahatma whom he nevertheless called his Master, not only with respect to religious matters but also in regard to modern industrial civilization and the organisation of individual and national life. In spite of these and other differences, which he never tried to conceal from Gandhi and his associates, Nehru was able to extend his unstinted cooperation to Gandhiji and to have his total confidence Though M.N. Roy had many things in common with Nehru, he did not find it possible to cooperate not only with Gandhi but also with Nehru whom Roy blamed for being too faithful a follower of the former.

Both Roy and Nehru were atheists; both found it impossible to believe in a supernatural order, and in future life and reincarnation. Early in their political career both had come under the influence of Karl Marx and his revolutionary gospel, but both of them

broke away, if not from Marx then from Communism, and came to attach great importance to democratic freedoms and institutions. Nehru liked to call himself both a democrat and a socialist; he also looked upon himself as a humanist. Roy, too, came to believe in more or less decentralised democracy; he became the founder of Radical Democratic Party as also of the ideology called New Humanism.

Neither Nehru nor Roy was a nationalist in the narrow sense; while the former may be correctly described as an internationalist, Roy, not approving the idea of nation states, claimed to be a cosmopolitan revolutionary. Roy's adherence to the idea or dream of a world revolution was a hangover from the period of his association with world-communist leaders such as Lenin and Trotsky. Both Roy and Nehru were uncompromisingly opposed to Fascism. Roy, indeed, devoted an entire book to critical appraisal and exposure of Fascism. He was equally uncompromising in his opposition to religion and to the religious leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. He joined the Indian National Congress in 1937; however, he did so not for cooperating with Gandhian leadership, but with the avowed purpose of splitting the Congress from within and for capturing it with a view to implementing the revolutionary programme of his own Party The most important difference between Roy and Nehru, as we shall see, was that while the former was primarily a thinker and a theoretician inclined to evaluate situations in terms of his doctrinaire ideas, the latter was in the main a creative actor interested in realizing his goals and objectives without having to resort, as far as possible, to unworthy or unfair means.

Manabendranath Roy (1887-1954), whose real name as given by his parents was Naren Bhattacharya, had been associated with several groups and organisations representing militant nationalism in Calcutta from 1903 onwards. In October 1905 the British Government gave effect to its decision to partition Bengal, which led to widespread agitation by the people particularly of Bengal. The revolutionary groups intensified their terrorist activities in Bengal, Maharashtra and Punjab. 'Unconcerned about the moral questions involved in murder and violence,'[1] Naren Bhattacharya committed the first dacoity at the Changripota Railway Station in December

[1]Vide, Samaren Roy, *The Restless Brahmin* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1970), p. 38.

1907, followed by 'a large number of dacoities in Eastern Bengal.'[1] Along with some associates Naren was also responsible for murdering a few Government agents and police officers. In 1914, shortly after the First World War had begun, Naren started hatching plans for armed insurrection against the Government, by getting arms from countries at war with Britain, e.g. Germany and Japan. The attempt not succeeding he proceeded under German advice and as a representative of the Bengal revolutionaries, on his first trip to Batvia in April 1915. He had left India in 1914 in search of arms. He visited Japan and, disappointed in his mission, passed through China, travelled through various East-Asian countries to San Francisco and finally reached Berlin via Mexico, Madrid, Milan and Zurich. In 1920 Roy met Lenin in Russia where he remained for about eight years, coming in contact with Stalin, Trotsky and other important leaders of the Russian Revolution. Having been in Berlin during 1929 Roy returned to India as late as 1930, was arrested and put in jail for six years. In 1937 he joined the Indian National Congress and, being dissatisfied with the Congress leadership dominated by Gandhi, organised a new party called Radical Democratic Party and started "Independent India", the Party's weekly organ The Second World War started in September 1939. In the middle of 1940 Roy organised a 15-day Political Study Camp whereat he delivered a series of lectures collected under the title *Scientific Politics*, first published in November 1942. Other more important works of Shri M.N. Roy for our purpose are: *Fascism*, Its Philosophy, Profession and Practice (1938), *Materialism*, An Outline of the History of Scientific Thought (1940); *Beyond Communism* (1946); *New Humanism* (1947); *The Russian Revolution* (1949); *Radical Humanism* (1952); *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution* (2 Vols 1952, 1955) Ever since Russia joined hands with the Allies in July 1941, Roy started advocating Indian cooperation with them in their war against the Axis powers. It has been claimed that M.N. Roy had predicted that, in the case of Allied victory in the war, 'Labour Party would come to power in Britain and . . . India would get independence'[2] But this is not wholly correct. In 1940 Roy was not quite so certain about the aforesaid

[1]Ibid , p. 39.
[2]B.N. Das Gupta, *M.N. Roy Quest for Freedom* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1974 (?)), p. 12.

consequences and outcome of the war. For one thing he was not inclined to be optimistic and envisaged the continuance of British power in the future; for another he was preparing for a long-drawn struggle for India's independence, having been wholly sceptical of the efficacy of Gandhian Satyagraha. The following statements, all from *Scientific Politics*,[1] will bear out the above assertions:

a) Realism may often sound like pessimism to those who are fond of illusions . . . Optimism is the mental state of the unthinking. (p. 11).

b) Imperialism could establish itself in India and remain here for such a long time, because its interests happened to be identical with those of a considerable section of the Indian population. Even today, that is the case. And it may be so even in future. (p. 69).

c) The army to fight the battles for freedom is *still to be created* . . . There must be a sufficiently numerous band of conscious revolutionaries before the forces of revolution, objectively maturing throughout the country, could be marshalled in a battle-array . . . Our Camp is the nucleus of the would-be brotherhood of revolutionaries (p. 7; emphasis added).

Practically in all his writings Roy is critical of Gandhian ideology and leadership, and sceptical about its outcome. Thus the 1947 edition of the work under reference still reproduces the following statement:

d) Our understanding of the nature of the problems of our movement, of the problems of mass mobilisation, of the problem of power, of the problem of leadership, does not permit us to share the illusion that the country can be prepared for any struggle by means of non-political, utopian, ludicrous Gandhian leadership of the Congress. The country must be led in the road of revolution, *if it is to attain freedom*. (p 8; emphasis added).

Roy's object in organising the Camp was 'to find the proper approach to all problems confronting the country' and 'to place before the country an alternative plan of action'. (loc. cit.).

The point of giving the above details of Roy's life and quoting some of his statements is to highlight the fact that during the period when the struggle for independence under Gandhian lea-

[1]Calcutta: Renaissance Publishers, second edition, 1947.

dership was gaining momentum through the various Satyagraha campaigns, Roy was absent from the Indian scene. He had not been able to witness the Gandhian movement in its active phases, and to observe at close quarters methods employed by Gandhi for awakening the Indian masses and mobilising them for national struggle On the contrary Roy had more or less first-hand experience of the post-revolutionary period in Russia, where he was occasionally entrusted with important missions by the Russian leaders. Roy's study of the Russian Revolution is an important contribution to the subject; the study required total absorption in the subject and a deeply sympathetic attitude towards the cause for which the revolution had stood. Having been attracted by the terrorist methods of fighting the enemy in his early youth, it was but natural that Roy should sympathise with Leninist tactics of capturing power and disapprove and be sceptical about the Gandhian technique of non-violent struggle. Having as he did but passing acquaintance with the Indian religio-cultural tradition, Roy was not able to appreciate the intimate connection between Gandhian leadership and the character, beliefs and attitudes of the Indian people. Also, since he had been deeply influenced by Marx's theory of Revolution and, through him, by the dialectical approach of Hegel, Roy found it difficult to believe that a leader even of Gandhi's stature could invent a new and original technique for fighting British imperialism. In his later life Roy made considerable departure from Marxist view of history and his theory of revolution; he even came to attach greater importance to ideas and to human creativity, still he did not find it possible to be reconciled not only to the Gandhian creed of non-violence but also to the adoption of Satyagraha as a policy Viewed against the background of Indian struggle for independence the tragedy of the ultra-leftist leaders like Subhas Bose and M.N. Roy was that, with all their distaste and dislike for quasi-religious methods of Gandhi, they were unable to suggest any alternative strategy for fighting the mighty British Empire. Another important limitation of Roy's approach was his total failure to appreciate the strength of the nationalist sentiment of the oppressed Indian masses on the one hand and the pernicious course of Muslim Communalism on the other Both these factors were vividly present to the minds of Congress leaders including Jawaharlal Nehru who, as stated earlier,

was neither an uncritical follower of Gandhi nor indifferent to the claims of socialism within, of course, the framework of democracy.

The truth is that during the critical period of his intellectual and emotional development and maturity Roy was breathing and living in the turbulent atmosphere of the European continent and Russia, surcharged with revolutionary ideas and aspirations. The years spent in Europe and Russia made him a cosmopolitan political thinker and statesman, divesting him of whatever traditional Indian influences he had imbibed in younger days As a consequence we find that while he was able to have sympathetic view of the personalities and achievements of the leaders of the Russian Revolution, particularly Lenin, and not excluding Stalin, he showed himself to be strangely incompetent to comprehend with sympathy the phenomenon of Gandhi's personality and leadership It is both surprising and gratifying to note that Gandhi received greater understanding and appreciation from his numerous biographers and interpreters from the West than from such leftist leaders as Roy and Subhas Bose and from their followers to whom he appeared to be both a diehard traditionalist and a reactionary. In a chapter dealing with 'Hindu Tradition and Satyagraha and Gandhian Innovations' Dr. Joan V. Bondurant makes the following comments on the relationship between Gandhian philosophy of Satyagraha and the Indian tradition:

> The importance of differentiating the traditional on the one hand, and the Gandhian on the other, cannot be overemphasized *Gandhi used the traditional to promote the novel*, he reinterpreted tradition in such a way that revolutionary ideas, clothed in familiar expression, were readily adopted and employed towards revolutionary ends . . The assertion advanced by some that Gandhi was a Hindu revivalist arises from a superficial understanding of the manner in which he used these Hindu precepts (e.g. Swaraj, Ramrajya, Swadeshi, aparigrapha, truth, non-violence, self-suffering, etc.) . . But, into these traditional precepts Gandhi introduced considerations unfamiliar to Indian tradition and reminiscent of the rationalist, humanist tradition of West.[1]

[1]*Conquest of Violence*, pp. 105, 107, 108, italics added For growing Western appreciation of Gandhi's personality and thought see also *The Americanization of Gandhi*, Charles Chatfield (ed.), New York, 1976.

With all his acuteness of mind and historical vision Roy failed, regrettably as it appears in retrospect, both for himself and for the country, to place Gandhian Satyagraha in the world-historical context.

There are two distinct yet related sides of Roy's creative scholarship and thought. Both as a general theorist of revolution and as the historian of Russian revolution Roy holds an important place among scholars and thinkers alike. But he did not succeed in comprehending the Indian revolutionary scene of conflict and reconstruction in terms of the concepts drawn from European thought and history. Following Lenin Roy had correctly held the view that in India a bourgeois-democratic revolution had to precede the revolution of the masses that would bring power to them. But he had failed to see that the Congress had been working precisely towards the democratic revolution as envisaged by him. The liquidation of about six hundred princely states followed by the abolition of Zamindari system, and the framing of an enlightened secular constitution for India were some of the notable achievements of the revolutionary struggle waged by the Congress under Gandhi's leadership.

The other side of Roy's thought found fulfilment in the formulation by him of the philosophy of Radical or New Humanism. This philosophy occupies an important place in the growing tradition of modern Indian thought.

ROY'S CONCEPTION OF PHILOSOPHY

Roy's world-view is dominated by his admiration for science and the scientific attitude and outlook. This is not to say that he is insensitive to the limitations of science. He knows as well as anybody else that theories and principles formulated by science are not final, being subject to revision in the light of the growing body of experimental data. Nevertheless he is prone to equate knowledge with scientific truth. There is no knowledge other than scientific truth. He also believes in the unity of the sciences and of scientific method All the sciences, physical, biological and social, constitute an inter-related body of knowledge. As regards the relationship between science and philosophy he asserts: 'Science is a higher thing than philosophy. But philosophy needs

not to be degraded, if it is conceived as the sum total of scientific knowledge '[1] This conception of philosophy is supposed by Roy to afford a vindication of materialism. 'Materialism', he avers, 'is vindicated as the only philosophy possible, provided that philosophy is defined as logical coordination of all the branches of positive knowledge in a system of thought to explain the world rationally and to serve as a reliable guide of life.'[2] The problem how this coordination is possible in detail is not raised and discussed by Roy. His definition of philosophy reminds us of Herbert Spencer's conception of philosophy, who thought that the business of philosophy was to formulate principles of highest generality from which the less general laws of the several sciences might be deduced as corollaries. Now it is well known that the laws of physics, e.g , are couched in mathematical terms. Roy observes: 'It is to-day an accepted principle of science that no branch of study can claim the distinction of being scientific unless it can be stated in mathematical formulas'. (*Scientific Politics*, p 70) He expresses the view that the social sciences are gradually progressing towards stating their problems and principles 'approximately in mathematical formulas'. But he has not firmly supported his view with examples; nor has he tried to tell his readers how philosophical truths may be expressed mathematically.

LAW-GOVERNED UNIVERSE

Roy's faith in science leads him to lay emphasis on the fact that the universe, which lends itself to scientific treatment, is law-governed. Probably under the influence of Hegel—maybe the influence reached him through Marx and Engels—he interprets this fact as meaning that the universe is rational. Now the conception of the universe as rational fits in the system of Hegel who looked upon the universe as an expression of the Absolute Idea or Reason, but hardly makes sense in the materialistic world-view of Karl Marx or that of M.N. Roy. It is men and women who may

[1] *Scientific Politics* (Calcutta: Renaissance Publishers, second edition, 1947), pp. 36-37.

[2] *Reason Romanticism and Revolution* (RRR), Vol. 2 (Calcutta: Renaissance Publishers, 1955), p, 302.

be properly called rational or irrational, the epithets hardly make sense when applied to the system of nature or the cosmos as a whole.

However, the faith or belief that the universe is law-governed has a crucial role in Roy's philosophy of man That philosophy is deduced from the above belief taken as a general principle, together with the theory of evolution. Before taking up that deduction one more point regarding the nature of physical laws stressed by Roy may be noted It is well known that in recent physics, particularly micro-physics, the scientists have been compelled to introduce the concept of statistical laws and of probability; these concepts, according to some philosophers of science, involve negation of Determinism, at any rate absolute and strict Determinism, in nature. Roy does not agree with this interpretation of modern science According to him 'Probability itself is an expression of Determinism' (*Scientific Politics*, p 49) The universe, thus, remains a system governed by mathematical laws that may be formulated with a high measure of exactitude But the situation seems to give rise to an intriguing question: how can such a universe throw up, during the course of evolution, a being endowed with freewill? The question assumes puzzling significance particularly for Roy's philosophy which attaches the highest importance to the freedom of the individual, regarding it as the supreme value of life

The professed aim of Roy's philosophy, as stated in the preface of his major work *Reason Romanticism and Revolution*, is 'to rescue rationalism and ethics from the devastating consequences of scepticism.' This, of course, is to be achieved within the framework of scientific materialism and on the basis of a 'humanist interpretation of cultural history' Starting with the premise that the universe is law-governed Roy proceeds to assert that, in the context of such physical universe, 'biological evolution is also a rational process' What is called life is a determined physical process. 'In metaphysical terms, it is the unfolding of reason in nature'[1] Next, Roy proceeds to explicate his conception of reason. He equates it with 'the simple, instinctive notion that every object of experience is connected with some other object or

[1]*Reason Romanticism and Revolution*, Vol. I (Calcutta, 1952), p 19.

objects which may or may not have been already experienced.' Consciousness, a property of life in the zoological world, means awareness of the environment. 'The mind becomes conscious of the environment, the radius of which gradually expands until the entire nature is embraced. It being consciousness of a law-governed system, human mind is necessarily rational in essence. (p. 20). From the rationality of man follows his ethical nature The following passage summarizes the main steps in the argument:

> The mystery of man has been solved by modern biology. Man is the outcome of biological evolution In order to find the sanction of morality in man himself, and avoid at the same time the morass of mysticism, the roots of what is called conscience or moral sense must be traced in mechanistic biological functions articulated as instincts and intuitions ... The descent of man, therefore, can be traced to the law-governed physical universe. Man's rationality and moral sense, which are causally connected, are the expression of cosmic harmony. (RRR, Vol. 2, p. 301).

Roy is an avowed materialist, though he prefers to describe his ontological viewpoint as 'physical realism.' Highly solicitous of moral values, he is absolutely indifferent, rather antagonistic, to religion. But the account of the emergence of rationality and moral sense given by him raises several inconvenient questions If reason is the consciousness of the law-governed system, its character must be definable with reference to the laws as found governing the physical nature. All these laws, according to Roy's admission, are deterministic laws; what bearing can this fact have on the nature and character of the reason in man? Furthermore, the laws in question are factual in nature. The question is: How can the factual laws give rise to moral consciousness which articulates itself as evaluative awareness of the merits of different courses of action? Now the rationality involved in such awareness is *qualitatively different* from that implied in the apprehension of necessary connections. At most what is called rationality may be taken to be an instrument of perceiving the interconnections between ends and means; the perception of ethical qualities and differences of moral worth involves something more than seeing merely

the consequences of actions performed by different agents. There is an essential difference between the 'is' and the 'ought', which cannot be assimilated to purely factual perception The ambiguity involved in the concept of rationality as attributed to the physical universe has already been noted. In fact, the necessity implied in being law-governed cannot, without inviting metaphysical confusion, be identified with the reason operating in conceptual comprehension and knowledge This muddled identification seems to be a legacy of Hegel inherited by Roy through his long association with Marxist thought. Similarly, the rationality that expresses itself in the awareness of moral distinctions is different in *kind* from the rationality exhibited in the apprehension of logical connections among concepts relating to factual realities

The dualism between the determined, factual order of nature and the moral order of freedom was clearly seen by Kant who assigned moral action to the noumenal sphere. Roy, however, is not agreeable to accepting the dualistic ontology either of Kant or of Descartes Therefore, he is called upon to account for the incidence of freedom in his law-governed universe Here another phenomenon involving another sort of dualism in the working of the human mind deserves notice. To use Rousseau's terminology there are quite a few cases of conflict between the will of the individual and the so-called General Will. Such cases usually involve a clash between the interest of the individual and the interest or the good of the society, or a conflict between the interests of two or more individuals. Nor can it be shown in every such case that the conflict is due to the element of irrationality in the conduct of the individual. It is perfectly rational for the individual to seek power, position or material benefit without caring for the interests of others. There may also be cases of conflict between the so-called lower and the higher interests of the concerned individual. Such cases give rise to a number of questions as to the meaning of rationality or rational action. There is a problem discussed by quite a few important ethical thinkers: Why should I sacrifice my own interest for the sake of others? Why be altruistic? I do not see how an answer to this question can be found within the framework of a purely materialistic philosophy. In order to find a proper basis for morality we have to assume in man the existence of some such impulse as the demand

for justice. It seems to me that the sentiment of justice cannot be strictly derived either from the evolutionary history of living creatures or from the rationality of man. The *sui generis* character of this sentiment, as also of the sentiment of benevolence, has been recognised by moral philosophers like Henry Sidgwick and Bishop Butler. Superficially, it seems simple to derive these important moral sentiments from man's rational nature, but the derivation is spurious inasmuch as its plausibility depends wholly on the ambiguity of the terms 'reason' and 'rationality'.

Man is something more than a part of nature. Nature, which is law-governed, knows no hesitation or conflict in its functioning under diverse circumstances. It suffers from no scruples or qualms of conscience. It is not confronted with conflicting choices; in fact, it never feels compelled to make a choice, hard or soft. On the contrary, man is constantly required to choose between alternatives, indeed, it is the need and possibility of choice that makes him a free agent As Sartre says, man is condemned to be free It is surprising that Roy should fail to see the necessary antagonism between being law-governed in a strict sense and being free. The truth seems to be that man is subject to the pull of a number of impulses and forces including the pressure of circumstances, ideas and values, ideals or imagined goals. It is both the agony and the glory of man that he has to steer his life's ship over the turbulent sea swept by conflicting currents and cross-currents of ideal waters.

Nor can the rationality of man be taken for granted in all spheres. Man needs education, not only in logic and the sciences, but also in the apprehension and understanding of values, as also in wisdom or wise living, which involves judicious adjustment and ordering of diverse interests and values. Granted that man has the potentiality to understand and appreciate both the logic of factual concepts and the logic of the values, the twofold logic has to be assiduously cultivated by the individual who would grow to his full spiritual stature. Roy's philosophy offers no explanation of the need on the individual's part to cultivate or educate his reason in its diverse forms or manifestations.

Leaving aside Roy's ontological explanation of the phenomenon of the moral man, we shall attend to his more concrete ideas about man as an individual and as a social being. Here it

will be useful to view Roy's socio-cultural philosophy against the background of the Marxist system with which it may be profitably compared and contrasted During his stay in Russia, as has already been indicated, he came in close contact with professed followers of Marx such as Lenin and Trotsky Otherwise, too, as appears from his writings, he must have made an extensive study of Karl Marx and his socialist predecessors as also of the classical British economists. There can be no doubt that Roy was influenced by the monistic materialism of Karl Marx; this is shown by his horror of dualistic ontology. In spite of all the influence that Lenin had on his theory of revolution he came to develop important differences with the Marxist outlook In the first place Roy has great admiration for the age of enlightenment and for the great economists of the seventeenth and the early eighteenth century and for the liberal as well as the socialist thinkers, both British and continental, including Ricardo, Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, Vico, Michlete, Proudhon, Feuerbach, and others. Some of these thinkers are dismissed by Marx and the Marxists as utopian, Roy does not approve of such dismissal. He considers the utopian element to be characteristic of all forward-looking, romantic and revolutionary thought. In fact, Roy thinks that Marx himself, insofar as he believes in man's power to mould his future destiny, may be taken to be a utopian thinker. Roy is particularly enamoured of the humanist materialism of Feuerbach; he also prefers the scientific naturalism of the eighteenth century to the dialectical materialism of Marx which in his view is akin to idealism. Claiming his own brand of socialism to be scientific, Marx is disinclined to attach much importance to the moral force behind the socialist ideologies. This, again, is considered a mistake by Roy. According to him the final sanction of a revolution is its moral appeal.[1] This is equally true of the revolutionary philosophy of Karl Marx himself Not only was Marx, as a prophet of revolution, a romanticist and a utopian thinker, he had moral fervour of the highest kind, which made him undertake 'the lone fight to improve the lot of the oppressed and exploited'. (ibid , p. 17). Roy quotes a statement of Engels to the effect that a particular economic phenomenon already ceases to exist 'when the moral

[1]*New Humanism* (Calcutta: reprinted 1961), p. 32.

consciousness of the masses declares it to be wrong'. (RRR, Vol. 2, p. 199). This means that moral consciousness by itself may continue to be a cause of revolutionary action. This goes against the dogma of economic determinism upheld by Marx.

Nor does Roy endorse Marx's wholesale rejection of the so-called bourgeois culture. He says: 'If the germs of Socialism or Communism grew in the womb of the Capitalist society, then the inspiration for a truly liberating philosophy of the future should also be found in the moral and spiritual values of the so-called bourgeois culture'. (*New Humanism*, p. 9) The communists proudly declare that they have no use for the capitalist culture and bourgeois morality. 'But', says Roy, 'until now there is no other culture and morality. Proletarian culture is a contradiction in terms'. (ibid., p 29). Roy believes that the proletariat 'by itself is not a revolutionary force'. The reason is the intellectual and cultural backwardness of the proletariat as a class. The ideal of a new order may have an appeal for it, but the ideal can be conceived only by middle class intellectuals. Roy also has doubts about the theory of class struggle as propounded by Marx. 'The refusal of the contemporary capitalist society to be polarised into two classes according to Marxist prediction throws doubt on the theory of class struggle . . . Marxism certainly is wrong as regards the role of the middle class in the capitalist society'. (*New Humanism*, p. 25). Contrary to Marxist prediction, the middle class has multiplied in numbers. They have to play a very important part in the future set-up of the new society 'The fundamental democratic principle—the greatest good to the greatest number—can be realised only when the conduct of public affairs will be in charge of spiritually free individuals who represent their own conscience before anybody or anything else'. (ibid., p 42). Roy substantially agrees with Lenin that the proletariat (or the masses) have inevitably to be led by the middle class intellectuals organised in a party.

Marx tended on the one hand to overemphasise the role of economic factors in the genesis of revolutionary upsurge, on the other he was inclined to underrate the importance of moral and ideological factors. But these factors are crucial according to Roy. The middle class intellectuals become the leaders in a revolutionary struggle in virtue of their capacity to give articulate vocal

expression to the moral and ideological issues involved in the conflict-situation. As a matter of fact while the socio-economic and political theories propounded by revolutionary thinkers have their vogue and influence for a limited span of time, the moral perceptions and urges being rooted deep in human nature exert a continuing and far-reaching influence in human affairs. While the perception and formulation of what constitutes justice at a given stage in the history of human civilization may change from time to time, the urge to do and receive justice continues to be an abiding force and a recurring determinant in human affairs.

We have seen some fundamental points of difference between Roy and Karl Marx. The differences centre mainly around the status and role of the individual in the making of history both as a thinker and as a moral agent. Roy seems to think that even economic factors influence history only when they assume a moral garb. This transformation of the economic factors into moral issues is brought about by thinking individuals. 'Revolutions are heralded by iconoclastic ideas conceived by gifted individuals'. (RRR, Vol. 2, p. 310). In Roy's thought reason, romanticism and revolution co-exist as related concepts, which together characterise man as a creative, forward-looking being. Romanticism implies man's faith in himself as the maker of his destiny. 'In the last analysis, there is no contradiction between rationalism and the romantic view of life The two are harmonised in the idea of revolution'. (RRR, Vol. I, p. 15). The revolutionary history of man is not a mechanical process, determined by the forces or modes of production. Gifted individuals play a crucial role in a successful revolutionary struggle

We shall how note Roy's relation as a thinker to some of his compatriots in the context of India's struggle for Swaraj. I use the term Swaraj because that term included the sort of constitution and Government that the patriotic fighters for independence visualised for the country. As regards Roy himself, he seldom mentions any point of agreement with the more important Indian leaders. In particular, so far as his writings are concerned, his stance towards Gandhian leadership was ever critical. Nevertheless, there is an underlying current of kinship or agreement between Roy's thought and that of several other personages associated with Gandhi and Gandhi himself. We have already noted

how opposition to Fascism was common to all the Congress leaders that counted. As is well known one of the cardinal principles of Gandhi's philosophy of Satyagraha and of life was the emphasis on the moral purity or propriety of means employed to gain (even) political ends It may be doubted if any notable political thinker, either in the East or in the West, ever attached so much importance to the sanctity of means as an article of faith. Even the professed followers of Gandhian leadership in the Congress did not swear by Gandhi's *Ahimsa* which they adopted more as a policy than as a creed. Roy, of course, is to be looked upon neither as one of the followers of Gandhi nor as a votary of *Ahimsa*. Nevertheless he was categorically opposed to the dictum and the doctrine that the end justifies the means. He says: 'It is very doubtful if a moral object can ever be attained by immoral means.' 'In critical moments,' he goes on to add, 'when larger issues are involved and greater things are at stake, some temporary compromise in behaviour may be permissible. But when practices repugnant to ethical principles and traditional human values are stabilised as the permanent features of the revolutionary regime, the means defeat the end.' This, according to Roy, is the main reason why 'communist political practice has not taken the world, not even the working class, anywhere near a new order of freedom and social justice.'[1] Maybe Roy came to these conclusions about the use of unethical means in politics by his own thinking, but the possibility cannot be ruled out that he was influenced by Gandhiji in the matter. It may be noted that Jawaharlal Nehru also subscribed to the Gandhian doctrine of the purity of the means to about the same extent as Roy.

Another unexpected point of agreement between Roy and Gandhi is about the role each assigns to the elite in society and administration. Roy, of course, does not endorse the Gandhian theory of Trusteeship, but, as we have seen, he very much looks forward to moral and intellectual leaders of men for implementing the policies of the 'Radical Democracy' envisaged by him.

Both Gandhi and Nehru had been in England for sometime in connection with their education, both had imbibed some of the values of liberal democracy with its emphasis on the worth of the

[1]*New Humanism*, p. 32.

individual. Roy, too, attached the greatest importance to the individual and his liberty. Gandhi was distrustful of concentration of power in the centralised authority of the state. Roy shared this distrust and wanted a system of government in which the individual citizen would exercise effective control over the people's representatives controlling the machinery of the state. He observes: 'The defects of formal parliamentary democracy . . . result from the delegation of power. To make democracy effective, power must always remain vested in the people, and there must be ways and means for the people to wield the sovereign power effectively not periodically but from day to day'. (*New Humanism*, Thesis 12, p. 55) But Roy is distrustful of even planned economy which tends to curtail the liberty of the people Politically, his proposal is to set up a pyramidal structure of the state, with the Parliament constituting the apex, the structure being reared on the base of 'an organised democracy composed for a countrywide network of People's Committees'. (ibid., p. 56). Likewise he envisages the formation of local cooperative organisations as the nuclei of a new system of economy. (p. 93). These smaller organisations are calculated to act as safeguards of the sovereignty and the economic liberty of the people

A materialist to the core Roy, unlike Tagore and the Vedāntists in general, had faith neither in the reality of the soul nor in its being a spark of Divinity. A product of biological evolution man is important in virtue of being a rational creature. 'The only way out of the impasse is to help him remember that he is a man, and not a slave either of a divine slave-driver or of any terrestrial power'. (ibid., p. 91). Roy, like Gandhi, is convinced of the innate dignity and goodness of man. He says: '. . . an unprejudiced study of history reveals that the desire to be helpful to fellowmen is a more fundamental human trait than competition and conflict'. (ibid , p. 19) His firm faith in the efficacy of man's reason and goodness to solve the problems of the crisis-ridden world of ours finds eloquent expression in the following words:

> A brotherhood of men attracted by the adventure of ideas, keenly conscious of the urge for freedom, fired with the vision of a free society of free men, and motivated by the will to remake the world, so as to restore the individual in his

position of primacy and dignity, will show the way out of the contemporary crisis of modern civilization.[1]

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU (1889-1964)

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, was only two years junior to M.N. Roy. We have already noted the several points of agreement in belief and attitude between these two eminent personages, we may now notice some of the differences that separated them particularly in practical politics. David Hume, the eminent British philosopher, has observed that the driving force in man's life is emotion rather than reason, the latter being merely a servant and minister of the former[2] Roy, as we have noted, was primarily a thinker and a theoretician. His early life of association with the terrorists and his travels over the globe as also his prolonged stay in Europe produce a deceptive appearance of his having been a man of action. Maybe he was driven by the romantic craze for sensation and experience which he tried to satisfy by his association with or in the company of revolutionary personages of Europe. But, taken by himself, he was not a man of action capable of leading masses of people in a battle. Nehru, too, was not an active, revolutionary leader by temperament; but he was a man of strong loyalties with intense emotional attachment to values and ideals that he rationally cherished. Born and bred in an aristocratic atmosphere, Nehru was an individualist with a developed sense of self-importance. Unlike Gandhi he could not mix with the common people for whom, at a later stage, he came to have a saviour-like attitude of protective concern. The sense of pride that was almost an inherited trait in him came gradually to be transferred to the history and culture of his country; later on, it embraced the entire Asian continent viewed vis-a-vis Europe or the Western world.

Now the sense of pride, related either to one's personality and achievements or to the country, needs hard work to be sustained and nourished. While Nehru the historian felt proud of his Indian

[1]*Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, Vol. 2, p. 310

[2]Vide, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, L.A. Selby-Bigge (ed.) (Oxford· reprinted 1955), pp 415, 431.

heritage, Nehru the politician and statesman was, throughout his life, actively engaged in, first, winning India's independence, and then in building her up as a strong and prosperous nation with a political and diplomatic stature worthy of her great past Using a different idiom it may be asserted that the driving force of Nehru's life was his patriotic nationalism which committed him to lifelong work of fighting for the country's independence and building up its strength as a member of the comity of nations.

This is not to deny that M.N Roy, too, was a patriot However, his life and thought were governed more by other impulses. In fact, he belongs more to the realm of thought than to the world of action; he is not much of a revolutionary leader; rather, he is a theorist of revolution and revolutionary ideas. Compared to Nehru, he seems to have little sense of actual, concrete history of mankind Instead, he shines as a historian—or rather as a committed historical observer—of the growth of ideas. Here again, he suffers from a grave limitation as an Indian leader: he seems to be but little acquainted with the religio-philosophical and cultural history of India, particularly in its grander phases. He never attempted to "discover" India like Nehru, and to view Indian history and culture in the broader perspective of historical civilizations Again, both as a historian and as a man of letters, Nehru's interests are varied and broadbased. Roy, on the contrary, has one-track mind, having his vision focussed on the ideas and forces that contribute to or thwart man's progress towards freedom, cultural and economic. Since these forces can be best studied in the context of well-recorded European history, Roy does not find it necessary to go beyond that history. As for the history of his own people and country, Roy has usually to offer uncharitable and harsh comments about them. And insofar as Gandhi's personality, his moral-spiritual outlook and his cult of non-violent non-cooperation and Satyagraha have roots in the Indian tradition, they are subjected to repeated criticism by Roy. Further, in his assessment of Nehru, Roy's main complaint against him is that he 'allowed his morbid attachment to Gandhi to overwhelm his own conviction and leave his followers in the lurch.'[1] According to Roy Nehru's personal attachment to Gandhi 'precluded his moving in

[1]See his article on Nehru in *Jawaharlal Nehru, A Critical Tribute*, A.B. Shah (ed) (Bombay: Manaktalas, 1965), p. 36.

the direction of genuine political greatness and creative leadership'. (ibid , p. 37). As a matter of fact Nehru was not fitted to be a political leader by temperament and his aesthetic bent of mind. In one place he has remarked that politics is not meant for gentlemen. But for his coming into contact with and under the influence of Gandhi with a programme of action that could be put in practice in conditions then prevailing in India, Nehru, like many other political associates and followers of Gandhi, might not have become a political leader at all. It was not for nothing that almost all the leading figures in the Congress looked to Gandhi when it came to give a battle to the arrogant and unscrupulously oppressive, occasionally ruthless, British Government. As a historian Nehru was accustomed to read and write about the heroic figures of the past. It was probably for this reason that he was not impressed by kings and generals like Alexander and Napoleon who figured so prominently in traditional historical writing The world-conquering heroes of the past centuries, as also the dictators belonging to the twentieth century, failed to impress him and win his admiration The only emperors and rulers who inspired respect in him were those who had stood for some great ideal and tried to do good for the people. That is why he loved to dwell on the achievements and greatness of Ashoka and Akbar. Maybe his patriotic pride in the historical achievements of his country or countrymen was another factor that conditioned him to discover and admire the greatness of Indian as also Asian heroes and wise men. The point of mentioning these facts about Nehru is that, had not Gandhi appeared to him to be a supremely great person, he could not have been driven to surrender himself to his influence with such willing enthusiasm On more than one occasion he refers to Gandhi as his Master, or as "our beloved leader", who was also, by general agreement, the Father of the Nation. Nehru's reverence for Gandhi, indeed, is comparable, in its constancy and depth, to that of Vivekananda for Ramakrishna with the difference that Nehru had the capacity to view the moral greatness and contribution of Gandhi in the context and perspective of the history of human civilization

We have already noted how Gandhi's personality and his heroic struggle in the cause of justice have elicited praise and admiration from diverse observers, socio-political commentators and leaders

of thought. As a close associate of Gandhi for about two decades, and as an eminent historian and author, Nehru was as well qualified as anybody else to assess and appraise Gandhi both as man and as one belonging to the rank of some of the greatest teachers of mankind. It is amazing, indeed, that Roy should have failed so completely to understand both Gandhi and Nehru's relationship with him

According to Edward M. Burns three main influences shaped the development of Nehru's mind. 'The first was his Western education; the second was the philosophy of Gandhi; and the third was Marxian socialism '[1] As a matter of fact it was not so much the 'philosophy' of Gandhi as his moral personality and his novel method of resistance and struggle that won over Nehru and charmed the world Nehru did not share Gandhi's religious world-view and his Vedāntic idealism, but he thoroughly admired Gandhi's identification of religion with the moral ideal of serving oppressed humanity. Though Nehru was not religious in the usual, traditional sense, he was yet sensitive to the holy charm of saintly character, characteristic of such personages as Ramakrishna and Gandhi.

The other two influences mentioned by Prof. Burns made Nehru a democratic socialist or a socialist democrat, a believer alike in the worth and dignity of the individual and a champion of the freedom of the individual and social justice. In addition, as already noted, Nehru was a great patriot committed to build a prosperous and progressive India, he was also committed to the cause of the freedom of the Asian and African people. The following extracts from his writings throw light on some of his dominant beliefs and pivotal convictions

> I have been and am a convinced socialist and believer in democracy, and have at the same time accepted whole-heartedly the peaceful technique of non-violent action which Gandhiji has practised so successfully during the past twenty years.[2]

[1]*Ideas in Conflict* (London, reprinted 1966), p. 103.
[2]Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India* (London. Lindsay Drummond, 6-Buckingham Street, 1941), p. 134.

> I suppose I am temperamentally and by training an individualist, and intellectually a socialist, whatever all this might mean. I hope that socialism does not kill or suppress individuality; indeed I am attracted to it because it will release innumerable individuals from economic and cultural bondage [1]

Few people might be knowing that Nehru the socialist was critical of the institution of property. In his *Autobiography* (p 543) he wrote:

> Personally I feel that the institution of private property (except in a very restricted sense) gives dangerous power to individuals over society as a whole and is therefore very harmful to society.

Nehru believed that the majority in the Parliament could very well modify the laws affecting property rights, it could even recommend the abolition of private property. Speaking in the Lok Sabha in 1955 he reiterated his suspicion and abhorrence of the institution of property. Replying to one Chatterjee he said:

> It is a monstrous thing that property should be made a god, above human beings. To say that whatever a man may do—he may even commit murder—is nothing, but property is a god and must be worshipped is a view of property which Government is not prepared to accept at all. . . . to talk in terms of sanctity, divinity and so on being attached to property is very much out of date.[2]

As a democrat Nehru was inclined to have respect for the views of others. 'Democracy means tolerance, tolerance not merely of those who agree with us, but of those who do not agree with us '[3] Nehru is not dogmatic, not even about things on which he has more or less settled opinions

[1]Quoted from *A Bunch of Old Letters* in *The Quintessence of Nehru*, K.T. Narsimha Char (ed.) (London, 1961), pp. 28-29

[2]*Speeches* (1953-57) (New Delhi Publications Division, Government of India, reprinted 1970), pp. 127-28.

[3]*Independence and After*, A Collection of Nehru's Speeches (New Delhi. The Publications Division, Government of India, 1949), p. 13.

'The method of democracy is discussion, argument, persuasion and ultimate decision and acceptance of that decision even though it might go against our grain. Otherwise the bigger *lathi* or the bigger bomb prevail and that is not the democratic method.'[1]

Nehru has great respect for science and is convinced of the usefulness and value of the scientific temper Indeed, he is anxious that his countrymen, who have been harbouring many superstitions, should cultivate the scientific temper and also respect for the methods of science. At he same time he knows that no science or scientist has been able to discover and formulate the ultimate or whole truth At best scientific theories may be taken to be approximations to truth. The awareness that no truth discovered by science, or, for that matter, by man as such may claim to be incorrigibly ultimate, makes him unassuming and humble as regards his opinions. Such a person cannot be dogmatic, unlike many of the followers of Karl Marx. There is a sense in which Nehru may be called a non-believer—he certainly was not a believer in the God of popular conception—still, it may not be proper to call him irreligious. On the one hand he is alive to the mystery of existence, although, as he confesses, he is not able to understand it; on the other he was able to extend his admiration to the saintly personality of Gandhi. He says.

What the mysterious is, I do not know. . . . I do not call it God because God has come to mean much that I do not believe in. I find myself incapable of thinking of a deity or of any unknown supreme power in anthropomorphic terms, and the fact that many people think so is continually a source of surprise to me. Any idea of a personal God seems very odd to me.[2]

Compare this confessional statement with the following passage in which he pays tributes to the saintly Mahatma:

Ages to come will judge . . . we are so near him to assess the many facets of his extraordinarily rich personality. But even we realize that the dominating passion of his life was truth.

[1]*Speeches*, 1953-1957, "Coexistence at Home," p. 178
[2]*The Discovery of India* (Calcutta: Signet Press, third edition, 1947), p. 12.

> That truth led him to proclaim without ceasing that good ends can never be attained by evil methods, that the end itself is distorted if the method pursued is bad . . . that truth led him to fight evil and untruth wherever he found them regardless of the consequences. That truth made service of the poor and the dispossessed the passion of his life, for where there is inequality and discrimination and suppression, there is injustice and evil and untruth . . because of the truth in him, wherever he sat, became a temple and where he trod was hallowed ground.[1]

No irreligious person could have penned the above comment, particularly the last sentence. It shows how mysteriously Nehru felt drawn and moved by the saintly personality of Gandhi. It may be remembered here that for Gandhi the term truth was synonymous with what the generality of people call God. Nehru refers to the many ways in which Gandhi endeavoured to realise truth or invoke divinity in his life and action.

Nehru knows that there is a close relationship between religion and metaphysics; also that religion tends to merge into mysticism. But mysticism (taken in the narrow and popular sense) irritates him. Contrary to this, he is attracted towards metaphysics and philosophy; he is also attracted to the monistic world-view, both in its Vedāntic and Marxist forms. But metaphysics is not an obsession with him. He says:

> Much in the Marxist philosophical outlook I could accept without difficulty: its monism and non-duality of mind and matter, the dynamics of matter and the dialectic of continuous change by evolution as well as leap, through action and interaction, cause and effect, thesis, antithesis and synthesis. It did not satisfy me completely . . and, almost unawares, a vague idealist approach would creep into my mind, something rather akin to the *Vedanta* approach (*Discovery*, p. 13).

Nehru also understands that the ultimate questions of life cannot have any definitive solutions or answers. Maybe for this reason there was in him 'a general tendency not to think too much of those fundamental questions which appear to be beyond reach,

[1]*Independence and After*, p. 30.

and rather to concentrate on the problems of life—to understand in the narrower and more immediate sense what should be done and how' (ibid , p 13).

As a matter of fact Nehru is not enamoured of thought unrelated to action. People who are too much absorbed 'in finding an answer to the riddle of the universe,' he observes, 'have a tendency to be led away from the individual and social problems of the day.' Such people, finding that they are unable to solve that riddle, turn, through despair, 'to inaction and triviality, or find comfort in some dogmatic creed ' Nehru does not approve of these styles of life and thought Indulging in highly general controversies of metaphysical type had little appeal to his active nature. 'I had little patience with leftist groups in India, spending much of their energies in mutual conflict and recrimination over fine points of doctrine which did not interest me at all'. For life is too complicated and, in our present state of knowledge, 'too illogical for it to be confined within the four corners of a fixed doctrine'. (ibid , p 14).

Nehru's approach to life, as he himself tells us, is predominantly ethical 'Some kind of ethical approach to life,' he avers, 'has a strong appeal for me, though it may be difficult for me to justify it logically'. (ibid , p. 12) Likewise faith in man's freedom, so essential for serious moral commitment and endeavour, is not easy to justify logically or metaphysically. Nehru is fully aware of the problem and inclined to believe in the reality of freedom on the basis of man's immediate consciousness of it or on faith He observes:

> Whether there is any such thing as human freedom in the philosophic sense or whether there is only an automatic determinism, I do not know A very great deal appears certainly to be determined by the past complex of events which bear down and often overwhelm the individual Possibly even the inner urge that he experiences, that apparent exercise of free will, is itself conditioned. As Schopenhauer says. "A man can do what he will but not will as he will." A belief in an absolute determinism seems to me to lead inevitably to complete inaction, to death in life. All my sense of life rebels against it, though of course that very rebellion may itself have been conditioned . . . (ibid., p. 6).

It goes without saying that belief in absolute determinism will be self-stultifying theoretically and paralysing in its practical effect. Here is another matter where a final metaphysical decision seems unattainable. Here Nehru is inclined to trust his educated common sense, and that seems to be the wiser course.

Nehru's ethical approach to life is connected with his restless urge for action. This urge is shared by many a leader of thought and action in our time. This seems to be due to two factors. First, the downfall of monarchical system of Government followed by the establishment of democratic forms has thrown the burden of socio-economic improvement of societies on the shoulders of common citizens and their leaders. Secondly, the conditions of crisis produced by modern wars, regional and global, call for moral and intellectual resources that only gifted individuals can supply. The unprecedented character of the crisis of modern civilization is proved—if at all a proof be needed—by the fact that mankind have staged two world wars within less than half a century. This accounts for the popularity of the several existential philosophies during the last few decades. Nehru's urge for action derived, at least partly, from the conditions in which he found himself and his countrymen placed by history. Commenting on the relationship between thought and action he remarks: 'The call of action has long been with me; not action divorced from thought, but rather flowing from it in one continuous sequence.' 'And when rarely', he adds, 'there has been full harmony between the two, thought leading to action and finding its fulfilment in it, action leading back to thought and fuller understanding—then I have sensed a certain fullness of life and a vivid intensity in that moment of existence' (ibid., p. 6) Speaking of a later phase of his life, he wistfully observes: 'the burden of thought is often a hindrance and in the mind where there was certainty, doubt creeps in. Perhaps it is just age, or the common temper of our day' 'And yet, even now,' he continues, 'the call of action stirs strange depths within me, and after brief tussle with thought, I want to experience again "that lovely impulse of delight" which turns to risk and danger and faces and mocks at death'. (ibid., p. 7). This accounts for Nehru's liking for active virtues and his admiration for men of action. Here it may be added that the action that appeals to Nehru is such as is related with some great objec-

tive and worthy end. 'In the pursuit itself of a mighty purpose,' he declares, 'there is joy and happiness and a measure of achievement.'[1] Nehru was attracted towards Gandhi, in the first place, because the latter was a man of action After the massacre of Jalianwalabagh, the whole nation was burning with indignation and anger, and was also bewildered and helpless. Gandhi appeared on the scene at the time with a plan of action to fight the insolent and brutal British rulers. Recalling the moment when he first read about Gandhi's proposal and pledge to disobey measures like the Rowlatt Act, he records how his reaction was one of 'tremendous relief'. 'Here at last was a way out of the tangle, a method of action which was straight and open and possibly effective.'[2] Nehru wanted to join the Satyagraha Sabha, that Gandhi had founded, immediately after reading about his programme. But he actually joined the movement only after the Amritsar tragedy.

In India, as Nehru has noted, there is a long tradition of admiring the life of renunciation and asceticism. Nehru himself was respected and admired partly because of his reputation of having sacrificed the comforts and luxuries associated with an aristocratic home. Gandhi, of course, had practised, since his South-African days, self-denial and renunciation on a much larger scale; that is why he came to be looked upon and adored as a Mahatma. Did not Nehru share these sentiments of the Indian people towards Gandhi ? On this matter he expresses his opinion in the following words:

> I prefer the active virtues to the passive ones, and renunciation and sacrifice for their own sakes have little appeal for me. I do value them from another point of view—that of mental and spiritual training—just as a simple and regular life is necessary for the athlete to keep in good physical conditions. And the capacity for endurance and perseverance in spite of hard knocks is essential for those who wish to dabble in great undertakings. But I have no liking or attraction for the ascetic view of life, the negation of life, the terrified abstention from its joys and sensations.[3]

[1]Quoted from *India and the World* in *The Quintessence of Nehru*, p. 34.
[2]*Autobiography*, p 41
[3]Ibid., p. 205.

At another place he remarks that he is, essentially, interested in *this* world, in *this* life and not in some future life in another world. While admitting that the questions as to the future survival and immortality of the soul are important he is yet not troubled by them 'in the least.' He grants the possibility of there being a soul that might survive physical death, but he does not believe in such doctrines and theories as a matter of religious faith. To him these are just 'intellectual speculations in an unknown region about which we know next to nothing.' He does not allow his active life to be affected by them

The active impulses of Nehru drew sustenance and added force from his restless temperament and imaginative mind on the one hand and from a sense of pride and the ambition to do great things on the other. As he grew morally and intellectually, he came to replace pride in himself by pride in the historical greatness of India and her people; and his ambition took the form of commitment to mould the country into a great nation. As the architect of India's foreign policy he espoused the cause not only of India but also of Asia as a whole as well as that of the African people.

Both Gandhi and Nehru endeavoured to serve mainly the Indian people. This does not imply that either of them was a man of narrow loyalties. Gandhi was thoroughly cosmopolitan in his outlook; he would willingly sacrifice India herself for the great ideals of Truth and Non-Violence. Nehru was a great internationalist who clearly saw that the freedom and prosperity of India could not be divided from the prospects of peace, prosperity and freedom in other parts of the world. Nevertheless the well-being of the Indian people constituted the central concern of his life and work. As a matter of fact the man of action has of necessity to limit the field of his work and service; such a man can serve the wider cause of humanity only indirectly. While Gandhi's life and ideas, particularly his novel method of fighting injustice and evil through Satyagraha, has meaning and significance for all the oppressed and peace-loving people of the world, Nehru served the cause of world peace as an outstanding exponent of the policy of non-alignment. And yet both Gandhi and Nehru were and continued to act as great patriots with deep attachment to India's cultural past and with faith and confidence in her future destiny.

In this sense both of them were upholders and practitioners of the ideal of Swadeshi. Gandhi's attitude towards Swadeshi, regarded as a concept and as an ideal, is clarified by him in the following words:

> Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as for religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of the definition, I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion This is the use of my immediate religious surroundings If I find it defective, I should serve it by purging it of its defects. In the domain of politics I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects.[1]

Nehru did not go all the way with Gandhi in his attachment to Indian institutions and to Hinduism, but in his own way he was proud of the country's heritage and, even as a historian, full of admiration for such great teachers or leaders in Indian history as the authors of the Upanishads and the Buddha on the one hand and the emperors Ashoka and Akbar on the other One important reason why he felt a special concern for India and for Asia as a whole was that, overlooking the contributions to civilization they had made in the past, the Western nations, by virtue of their economic and political domination of Asian countries, tended to belittle and ignore them. Nehru's proud nature revolted against this situation. As a consequence it became the mission of his life to raise the political and economic standing of the Asian people in general and India in particular

Though proud of India's glorious past Nehru was not blind to the shortcomings of the Indian people and their character As a historian he inevitably dwelt upon the forces and factors that contribute to the greatness of the people and their culture and also on those that led them towards decline. Nor did he stand merely for the revival of attitudes and practices that had heen found useful in the past. His attitude towards the rich heritage of the past is a balanced one

[1]Quoted by Dr. Joan B. Bondurant in *Conquest of Violence*, pp. 106-07.

He says:

> Nothing is more advantageous and more creditable than a rich heritage; but nothing is more dangerous for a nation than to sit back and live on that heritage. A nation cannot progress if it merely imitates its ancestors; what builds a nation is creative, inventive and vital activity.[1]

Though greatly devoted to Gandhi as a man of high ideals and as an effective leader of the people, Nehru was not a blind follower of him. In fact, as regards the ends and values to be properly pursued by individuals and nations, Nehru had wide-ranging differences with Gandhi. Thus, as against the latter, he stood for large-scale industrialisation of the country and for higher standard of living for the people. In fact, believing as he did in the ideal of a rich and meaningful life for his countrymen and for mankind in general, he welcomed and sought to encourage all those forces, schemes and attitudes that might contribute to that life; contrariwise, he frowned upon and condemned the habits and attitudes that came in the way of productive endeavour and creative, meaningful life. Thus, while surveying the vast panorama of Indian history, his patriotic yet critical eye, while highlighting the plus points of Indian culture, does not fail to see where it stumbled and faltered, miscarried or missed the chance. For instance, he regrets the fact that Akbar's curiosity was limited in its range. The great Mughal emperor was powerless at sea and although Vasco de Gama had reached Calicut as early as 1548, it did not occur to Akbar to contemplate having a navy of his own. Again the Mughal armies relied mainly on foreign experts in the matter of artillery. Nehru pertinently asks: 'Why did not Akbar . . . send his own men abroad for training or interest himself in improvement by encouraging research work?' Then again, Nehru complains, why did not Akbar, who had been presented a printed Bible by the Jesuits, 'get curious about printing which would have been of tremendous advantage to him in his governmental activities as well as his vast enterprises?' A third failure of the great emperor's curiosity was in regard to the clocks that had already been in use in Europe. It never occurred to Akbar, great as

[1]Quoted from an address at the University of Saugar in *Quintessence*, p. 31.

he was in several respects, to import the knowhow to have them manufactured in India.[1]

I am not aware if any professional historian of medieval India has noted these failures of the great emperor who represented the Indian mind, even the religious mind, of those days at its best. There are several other allusions of this kind to occasional failures of the creative impulse of the Indian people scattered in the major works of Nehru. Since Nehru was primarily a man of action passionately interested in rebuilding the country, a comprehensive account of his humanistic ideas cannot be given without references to what he wrote or said on different occasions in his politically active years, both during the period of India's struggle for independence and after he had been installed in the office of the Prime Minister

In a speech at the meeting of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in March, 1949, Nehru observed.

> Our problem today is to raise the standard of the masses, supply them with their needs, give them the wherewithal to lead a decent life, to help them to progress and advance in life not only in regard to material things but in regard to cultural and spiritual things also What will happen in the distant future, I do not know, but I should like to set them on the right road and I do not care what 'ism' it is that helps me to set them on that road, provided I do it. And if one thing fails, we will try another. We need not be dogmatic about this or that approach. Anything that comes in the way has simply to be ignored, or will be swept away.[2]

The statement briefly outlines the objectives for which Nehru stood as the first Prime Minister of India. The emotional side of his ideas about the reconstruction of the country comes out in the following utterances of his:

> Mahatma Gandhi taught us to view our national struggle always in terms of the underprivileged and those to whom opportunity had been denied. Gandhi said on one occasion that it was his supreme ambition to wipe every tear

[1]See *Discovery of India*, pp. 213-14.
[2]*Independence and After*, pp 190-91.

> from every eye. That was an ambition beyond even his power to realise, for many millions of eyes have shed tears in India, in Asia and in the rest of the world and perhaps it may never be possible completely to stop this unending flow of human want and misery and suffering; and what are politics and arguments worth if they do not have this aim in view.[1]

On the one hand Nehru is conscious of the tremendous problems with which India and the world are faced; on the other he has confidence mixed with wonder in the spirit of man:

> How amazing is this spirit of man. In spite of innumerable failings, man throughout the ages has sacrificed his life and all he held dear for an ideal, for truth, for faith, for country and honour. That ideal may change, but that capacity for self-sacrifice continues . . .[2]

Elsewhere he remarks:

> We may be specks of dust on a soapbubble universe, but that speck of dust contained something that was the mind and spirit of man. . . . More wonderful than the earth and the heavens is this mind and spirit of man which grows ever mightier and seeks fresh worlds to conquer.[3]

Man's confidence in himself has been vastly strengthened by the conquests of science. Nehru is an admirer of science and the scientific attitude; also, he has great respect for the vocation of the scientist. 'The true scientist', according to him is the sage unattached to life and the fruits of action, ever seeking truth wheresoever this quest might lead him to.[4] At another place he remarks:

> Yet I am convinced that the methods and approach of science have revolutionized human life more than anything else in the long course of history . . the technical achievements

[1]*The Quintessence of Nehru*, p 53.
[2]*Discovery of India*, p. 16.
[3]*The Unity of India*, pp 180-81.
[4]Ibid., p. 179.

of science are obvious enough, its capacity to transform an economy of scarcity into one of abundance is evident, its invasion of many problems which have so far been the monopoly of philosophy is becoming more pronounced.[1]

Science has transformed human life and environment mainly through the mechanical inventions leading to the development of industries of various kinds. That is why Nehru was an advocate of large-scale industrialization of the country. He believed that the problems of poverty and unemployment could be solved only by large scale industrial production. In a talk "Produce or Perish" broadcast from New Delhi on Jan 18, 1948, Nehru said:

> Production means wealth. If we do not produce we do not have enough wealth Distribution is equally important, so that wealth cannot accumulate in the hands of a few, nevertheless, before we think of distribution, there must be production [2]

Here we may note how Nehru's humanism differs from that of Mahatma Gandhi Gandhi's dominant concern was the development of the moral personality of man; Nehru was interested, equally if not more, in the material welfare of the people, i.e. in the eradication of want and poverty by the application of science. Indeed, unlike Gandhi, he stood not only for this negative goal, but also for the positive goal of promoting the country's *prosperity* and *strength.* Commenting on the 'Place of the Big Machine' he once said·

> I shall venture to say that we cannot even maintain our freedom and independence as a nation without the big factory and all that it represents . . . We cannot keep pace with the modern world unless we utilize the sources of power that are available to the modern world.[3]

In fact, there are two important aspects of human progress. There is the growth of the human spirit, both in knowledge and in moral and spiritual quality, which is made possible by man's adventures of ideas, by the transmission of scientific culture

[1]*Discovery of India*, p 15
[2]*Indeoendence and After*, p. 159.
[3]*Speeches*, 1953-57, p 24

through education and by the inculcation of the sense of values in growing children and adults. In addition, the members of a civilised community should learn to voluntarily submit themselves to moral discipline expressing itself in respect for law and in loyalty to the ideals of justice, peace and unity and happiness of mankind For Gandhi moral discipline and ideals formed part of man's religious quest, which alone could bring about his ultimate fulfilment. Contrary to this, Nehru laid stress on this worldly progress and prosperity of individuals and nations. For the attainment of these goals or objectives two important prerequisites were education and peace Consequently, Nehru attached the greatest importance, on the one hand, to the education of the individual; and, on the other, to the maintenance of peaceful conditions both within the country and among the nations and communities of the world.

Nehru defined his conception of the nature, significance and role of education in the country and in the world on several occasions. Here are some of his observations on the subject:

> Ultimately, a country's standing in the world is obviously judged not by the number of people it has, crores and crores, but by the number of top-ranking men and women it has, who show results, who can give a proper lead, and also by the number of other eminent men it has to carry on the work of a large country. It is a certain quality that counts in the end, not quantity. . .[1]

Addressing the Aligarh students, he said:

> Whatever confusion the present may contain, in the future, India will be a land, as in the past, of many faiths equally honoured and respected, but of one national outlook, not, I hope, narrow nationalism living in its own shell, but rather the tolerant creative nationalism which, believing in itself and the genius of its people, takes full part in the establishment of an international order. The only ultimate aim we can have is that of one world . . Education is meant to free the spirit of man and not to imprison it in set frames.[2]

[1] *Independence and After* (Convocation Address at Lucknow University, 1949), p. 141.

[2] *Independence and After* (Convocation Address at Aligarh University, 1948), p. 123

Elsewhere he observed·

> A University stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for progress, for the adventure of ideas and for the search for truth It stands for the onward march of the human race towards even higher objectives. If the universities discharge their duty adequately, then it is well with the nation and the people. But if the temple of learning itself becomes a home of narrow bigotry and petty objectives, how then will the nation prosper or a people grow in stature ?[1]

Nehru thought that the universities should also teach some sort of basic wisdom, over and above imparting knowledge and skill relating to special fields. Specialisation has its merits, but an integrated life and personality is equally necessary The association of thought with action, according to him, is of utmost importance 'Thought without action is an abortion; action without thought is folly. They must always be allied, whatever we may do.'[2]

Nehru was primarily responsible for shaping the foreign policy of the Indian National Congress, and later on, of the Indian Government. As the first Prime Minister of free India he formulated that policy in the following words:

> The preservation of peace forms the central aim of India's policy. It is in the pursuit of this policy that we have chosen the path of non-alignment in any military pact or alliance. Non-alignment does not mean passivity of mind or action, lack of faith or conviction. It does not mean submission to what we consider evil. It is a positive and dynamic approach to such problems as confront us . . . We, therefore, endeavour to maintain friendly relations with all countries even though we may disagree with them in their policies or structure of Government. We think that by this approach we can serve not only our country but also the larger cause of peace and good fellowship in the world.[3]

To sum up: Nehru's secularist Humanism has several facets and phases, moral-spiritual and cultural, political and socio-economic.

[1]Ibid., p. 118 (Convocation Address at Allahabad University, 1947).
[2]*The Quintessence of Nehru*, p. 113.
[3]*Speeches* (1953-1957), p. 49.

As a confirmed democrat he believed in the dignity and worth of the individual and his right to freedom. He fought for his country's independence for the same reason, though, as a disciple of Gandhi, he came to attach the greatest importance to moral and peaceful methods of resistance and struggle with respect to the British rulers A lover of adventurous spirit both in thought and in action, he admired people who lived for great objectives and aimed at realising noble ideals As a socialist he disapproved of economic disparities and viewed with suspicion the institution of property. Above all he was a devoted worker in the cause of world peace which he considered to be the *sine qua non* of the progress and prosperity of mankind.

CHAPTER 5

Creative Humanism

WE have surveyed the more important contributions towards a humanistic outlook on life to be met with in the rich Indian tradition of religio-philosophic thought—ancient and modern. The importance attached to the category of *Ātman* in the Upanishads and the systems of metaphysical thought deriving from them, to existential suffering in Buddhism and to the ideal of *Jīvanmukti* in the entire range of spiritual reflections provide solid basis for the development of a humanistic philosophy of life. Among modern contributions to the humanistic trend in thought mention may be made of Tagore's stress on the anthropocentric character of human thinking and on man's drive towards creative self-transcendence. To the rich heritage of humanistic spiritualism Gandhi adds the significant conception of God as Truth manifesting itself in man's fascination for the higher and nobler in feeling, thought and moral aspiration While the traditional spiritual culture of the land is mainly concerned with the salvation or spiritual transformation of the individual Roy and Nehru are staunch advocates of institutional reorganization of society as a precondition both of the happiness and the moral-spiritual growth of the individual Though influenced by the gospel of Karl Marx who, like Aristotle and Hegel, stresses the essentially social nature of man, both Roy and Nehru are inclined to be more individualistic in their outlook, attaching greater importance to the freedom of the individual and the democratic institutions

Philosophy, in our view, is concerned not with physical phenomena including material objects and energies on the one side and the facts flowing from their combinations and operations on the other side, but with *meanings* and *values*, or rather with meanings insofar as they constitute values exhibiting qualitative differences. The meanings are superimposed on phenomena, physical phenomena in the first place and emergent conceptual or language-bound phenomena in the second place, by the human mind; they are defined in terms of human interests. Philosophy, generally, occupies itself with the analysis and explication of non-pragmatic, i.e. aesthetic, moral and religious meanings or values. All these values admit of qualitative differences and one important task of philosophy is to understand and grade these differences with reference to standards or criteria elicited from the contemplation of and reflection upon those differences. Thus, to take an example from the sphere of moral action, philosophy should enable us to understand why, say, the person who pays off the debt of a poor neighbour with an ailing child, is considered to be morally superior to one who is satisfied with repaying or discharging his own debts—provided that the two persons have comparable financial assets.

Philosophy may also attempt a large-scale synthesis of the value perceptions of a community, culture or age. Also, philosophy should enable us to see through the subjective elements infecting local-communal and national cultures, and to facilitate our movement towards the comprehension and acceptance of the more universal phases and expressions of human subjectivity.

The humanistic elements found in the Indian cultural tradition, as also those present in other traditions, stand in need of redefinition and reformulation, before they can be welded into a unity of vision acceptable to the modern mind. That mind is prone to apply stricter standards of evidence or validation than those known to ancient and medieval civilizations. Thus the Upanishadic concept of *Ātman* has to be replaced by the concept of man as known to us in his concrete existence, individual and social, the concept of *Jivanmukti*, too, needs redefinition or reformulation in terms having reference to the concrete being of man-in-society. The spiritual vision of the Upanishads, their ideals of detachment and renunciation, of *nishkāma Karma* and *Moksha* follow from their metaphysical world-view, that conceives man as *Ātman* in his essential

nature. The humanistic philosophy of life should likewise start with a conception of man that would enable us to impart a rational basis to the ideals and values vaguely present in modern man's consciousness.

Any conception of man dominant in a culture or cultural epoch, that seems to be the source or starting-point of its prevalent values or value perceptions, is actually an inductive principle forged to impart rational unity to those perceptions. Both in the domain of the physical sciences and in the sphere of the human sciences and the humanities such a principle is obtained not so much by an inductive procedure following the rules and canons of Baconian or Stuart Mill's system of (inductive) logic, as by sudden insight taking shape in a more or less vague hypothesis. Such insights, indeed, form the core and substance of diverse philosophies of man, such as those exemplified in various existential philosophies of our time.

A philosophy of life validates or rather justifies itself by offering a connected, normative account of the major value concerns of the community, culture or age responsible for its enunciation and propagation. It seems to us that no philosophy, however comprehensive the range of its perceptual data, can possibly do justice to all the value intuitions pertaining to diverse fields—cognitive and aesthetic, moral and spiritual—that inform the subconscious layers of the representative human minds. For one thing, different thinkers are inclined to attach different degrees of importance to diverse value phenomena, which circumstance makes for material difference in their perceptions and assessments of the phenomena concerned; for another, the thinkers or investigators may insist on different norms of evidence depending on their varied approaches to authority and their adherence to divergent evaluative standards. As an instance mention may be made of differences that divide religious thinkers professing faith in their respective scriptures from their secularist counterparts. Again, internal differences may exist among thinkers belonging to both the aforesaid camps as a consequence of their divergent assessments of the claims of socio-political life on the one side and those of relatively secluded pursuits of the arts and the sciences or literature and philosophy on the other. These latter pursuits often tend to detach the individual from the socio-political conflicts of the community and to discourage him

to make more active responses to the moral challenges posed by those conflicts. All these differences in attitudes and value-pursuits are reflected in the philosophies or philosophic visions fashioned by the representative thinkers of mankind.

We shall now enunciate the view of man entertained by Creative Humanism. The movements and activities of living beings including organisms even of the lower orders, cannot be adequately explained and understood without reference to the ends they subserve in the lives of those organisms. A large part of the organic activities of the human body, e.g. those of breathing, digestion and assimilation of food and the like, proceed without appreciable control by the owner of the body; they nevertheless contribute to the survival and maintenance of that body. Compared to other animals man has come, through the growth of the biological sciences and the science of medicine, to have a better appreciation of the functions of different parts and organs of his body; he has even learnt to influence, through administration of medicines, processes affecting the health and well-being of the body. But the distinctive feature of man is his conscious life, consisting in the articulation and pursuit of ends or values that do not always bear on the peculiar or private needs of an individual body. Living as he generally does in a community and state, the human individual consciously frames and formulates ends and values that may be shared and/or appreciated by his fellowbeings with common interests or requisite training and competence. This furnishes the necessary clue for a proper characterization and definition of man. Man as a creature of society and culture is a being given to con-
...lation and pursuit of values. Since the individual's
...n with that of the community to which he
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values consist of visualized meanings. These are seldom, if ever, identical with arrangements of physical objects; in fact, the meanings are *superimposed* upon or read into the arrangements in question. A certain arrangement of bricks and other building materials is designated a house, an arrangement of lines and colours a painting, and that of words and sentences a poem or a philosophical treatise. All these designations of arranged materials are indicative of meanings or values; they have being or reality *only* for men with a minimum of competence or training. Insofar as a meaningful arrangement or disposition of materials depends on the creative ingenuity and effort of one or more human agents, value pursuits are bound up with the exercise of creativity by man. In fact, conscious human beings use their creative powers and resources mainly for the production of values (or disvalues).

There is a sense in which every value that a man strives to attain or realize is non-existent before its realization, for the realization consists in the production of a new arrangement or a new situation, which embodies the intended meaning or value. It follows that a meaning or value is visualised or imagined, however vaguely, before effort is directed towards its realization This underlines the significant role of imagination in the creative life of man A man's imagination is stirred into action by the needs of his body, the needs of his family, community or nation, the need for change, by ambition, the challenge of obstacles or opposition, by access to new experiences, opportunities, means and materials, etc. Necessity may be the mother of invention in some cases, but that is not the only factor in the creative advance of mankind. Man visualizes new situations, new needs and new satisfactions; he also imagines new combinations of meanings cherished and pursued for their own sake New opportunities and powers available to the Napoleon-in-Paris, transformed the Corsican patriot who hated nobility into an imperialist seeking royal marriage partners for himself and members of his family. New vistas of imagination opened up for John Keats as he pursued his studies into the rich poetic world of Homer This explains why writers, both literary and scientific, need acquaint themselves with major achievements in their respective domains.

The imaginative projection of values, pragmatic and spiritual, instrumental and ultimate, is the major force and factor behind

the dynamics of man's life individual and collective The moral values, in particular, defined by various obligations and the sense of justice, constitute the most important factor in the demand for revolutionary changes in the socio-economic organisation of communities and states The revolutionary ideologies propagated by radical thinkers are, in the last analysis, rationalisations of the aforesaid demands. These ideologies succeed in winning followers to the extent to which they are able to expose the injustice of existing arrangements and relationships between the agents of injustice, the so-called exploiting classes, and those who suffer under those arrangements. We are, therefore, inclined to agree with M.N. Roy in his assessment of Marxism as a moral force in the garb of a scientific gospel.

What is the ultimate source of man's sense of justice, and how is it that it wields such tremendous power over men's minds? To find a satisfactory answer to this question we have once again to attend to what is distinctive in human nature and its expressions in life Man lives by creative effort and work for the realisation of diverse values; he seeks both appreciation and proper return or recompense for his work. The valuation of different types of work changes with alterations in the conditions of work and the utility and significance of that work with reference to the overall needs and value pursuits of the community. Thus skill in hunting and physical valour were accounted important in tribal and feudal societies respectively; qualities of leadership, science and technology enjoy prestige and vogue in societies of our own time. While societies dominated by religion and priesthood prize virtues like faith and obedience to authority our own technological society, made possible by the findings of bold scientific workers, puts premium on innovative experiments and inventions of all sorts.

Different ages and cultures, we are saying, tend to put differing valuations on diverse kinds of work. Man seeks safety from fear—fear of animals, of gods, of bandits and thiefs, of enemies—personal and national—no less than satisfaction of his needs The conditions under which various needs and fears arise and are satisfied and relieved have kept changing due to man's growing knowledge and control of physical environment on the one side and his growing skill in organising economic and socio-political life on the other

side. This twofold growth affects our valuations of diverse types of work, skill and personal qualities of men and women, it also affects the interrelationships of groups and classes within the community. Our assessments of the contributions of different groups or classes of people are partly coloured by the conflicting interests of those groups and facilities for ideological propaganda available to them severally On the other hand there is present, usually, a minority of thinkers and writers, belonging mostly to the middle classes, who seek to redefine justice and propagate new modes of assessment of work and distribution of wages, profits and/or facilities in the interest of what they consider to be the progress of humanity in general and that of the community, society or nation to which they belong in particular.

The sense of justice, in order to be effective, must be an inherent possession of the human mind. That sense cannot be generated by commandments, divine or secular. Nor can human nature be compelled for long to confirm to commandments in conflict with its native inclinations or innate compulsions. An acceptable norm of conduct, in fact, must at some point cater to the needs of men living under a given set of conditions Even those whose interests suffer by the enforcement of a new norm or regulation must be able to give it their unspoken psychological or moral assent. This sort of assent, indeed, has been responsible for the adoption of legislative measures favouring weaker sections in the society in all civilised countries.

This much by way of a general description of the source and sanctions of moral conduct. We shall now allude to some thorny problems that lie on the border-line between morality and religion. Man occasionally practises justice even if it involves sacrificing his own interests. Thus, driven by the sense of justice and/or the sentiment of honour, I may choose to pay back an unrecorded debt to the children of a deceased person. I may also expend time and energy to help an unknown person or group of people in distress. All sorts of altruistic conduct involve a measure of self-sacrifice for the benefit of others. In the third place, deeply religious persons and saints are known to be indifferent to such competitive goods as wealth, position, power and honour.

The above sorts of conduct, it seems, have a common source in some of the sentiments associated with man's consciousness of

his creative powers. These powers are accompanied by the sentiments of dignity, self-importance and pride. Thus the magnanimous man of Aristotle seeks, under the impulsion of the above sentiments, to bestow benefits on others rather than to receive the same from them. The greater the command a man has over creative resources, the more pronounced are his feelings of proud, self-sufficiency and self-importance. Such a man may rejoice in extending protection and help to others, for his creative energies are in excess of the need to solve his own problems. It is beneath my dignity to seek to appropriate or misappropriate the fruits of the creative work or labours of others, for, as a self-respecting and intelligent person, I am supposed to be able to solve my problems by myself. This should not be taken to mean that the person equipped with adequate creative capabilities disdains cooperating with fellow humans; what he actually disdains or dislikes is being the object of charitable pity and the cause of worry and botheration to others. Instead, such a person chooses to suffer and work for relieving the distress of the weak and the destitute. He feels satisfaction in assuming the protective role of the God or gods of popular description.

The creativity of man is closely connected with and dependent upon his power of imagination. Man's imagination seems to have two important functions. First, it projects new combinations of images, concepts and ideas in a spontaneous manner in such semi-conscious or sub-conscious states as dreams and reveries. These projections are controlled largely by the laws of association. Such projections are also characteristic of the poetic inspiration in its incipient stage. The second function of imagination is to create meaningful wholes of images and meanings through the evocation of missing links and larger designs. These processes occur when, for instance, the poet, reviewing the materials furnished by spontaneous acts of associative imagination, seeks to impart them meaningful unity. The poet may exert his imagination to find an alliterative phrase or a rhyming word. Such exertion has a critical side and a direction or purpose. The purpose is to achieve a combination of words that is calculated to invest the gestalt of meanings with multi-dimensional suggestiveness. The exercise of this latter function requires on the part of the poet wide acquaintance with the moral and religious, scientific and

philosophic (or metaphysical) culture of the age or community to which he belongs. Even so when the scientific investigator frames an hypothesis to bind together meaningfully the contemplated experimental and theoretical data present before his mind, it is his trained critical faculty that enables him to make that hypothesis acceptable to sophisticated coworkers in his field. Needless to say, the critical (or theoretical) purposive activity of the imagination also, and, in fact, more frequently, occurs at the practical level where men are constantly pursuing pragmatic goals and objectives.

The human imagination operates in yet another dimension as an instrument of meaningful living, namely the dimension of time. Among the living beings man alone seems to be capable of projecting, for himself as an individual and for his race, a course of life extending into an indefinitely long future; again, he alone seems capable of contemplating death and dissolution of his bodily existence. He can even visualise the extinction of his race and the end of the world Thus, while on the one hand man's imagination functions as an instrument of effective and rich living, it also acts, on the other, as a brake on his enthusiasms of all sorts. This probably is the higher source of man's religious consciousness, the lower source being the sentiment of fear and insecurity leading to the worship of the many gods or one God.

Religion is man's response to the totality of meanings involved in the possibilities of his finite existence; it is a device to adjust to that totality in a manner that would make life bearable and possibly cheerful. In its higher forms religion seeks to protect man against the depression arising from the contemplation of death and the finite and transient character of his achievements and successes. So conceived religion may either take the form of obstinate faith in a deity responsible for the preservation of values, or ripen into philosophic wisdom with cheerful resignation to the inevitable course of things accompanied, as in the case of the Buddha, by a sense of overwhelming compassion for conscious human beings and other sentient creatures. Thus there are two broad categories of religion, the religion of faith (and worship) and the religion of knowledge and wisdom. As faith is directed on a deity it may tend to dissociate man from the affairs of the world and the service of man: a sense of detachment is

also characteristic of the man of wisdom. But the man of faith may serve humanity if he believes that by so doing he would please his God; and the wise man, driven by his sense of compassion, may actively set about to enlighten humanity. The two sorts of religious career are exemplified in a superlative degree in the lives of Mahatma Gandhi and Gautama the Buddha. Substitute the impulse for higher and nobler life—or truth, as Gandhi calls it—for traditional Godhead, and you have the humanistic religion with accent on both service of humanity and the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge and wisdom. Whether a person believes in God or not, philosophic wisdom involves a measure of detachment towards purely personal concerns. Among world religions Buddhism lays the greatest and the most systematic emphasis on the metaphysical doctrine of egolessness and the cultivation of non-egotism. This emphasis is acceptable to humanism.

Some degree of detachment towards the personal, consciously cultivated and nourished, enables a person to be impartial and just on occasions when his own interests, or the interests of persons near to him, clash with those of others; it also releases his energies for the pursuit of impersonally significant objectives and values. It follows that a measure of religion or religiousness is a pre-requisite of effective cultivation of the higher cultural self, consisting in realised visions of truth and beauty. To be religious in our sense is to be lifted up and above the level of merely bio-physical existence, into a region where cultivated human persons enjoy a common spiritual being or existence. This, in our view, is the essence of transcendence that may be achieved by the person with a truly religious vision and disposition.

It is man's capacity for detachment that prompts and enables him to build institutions providing for justice and the conditions of harmonious living. The spirit of detachment towards the personal, again, is an essential ingredient in the habit of democratic tolerance of opinions differing from or in conflict with one's own. And, since the personal occasionally takes up the extended form of the communal and the national, the cultivation and practice of the virtue of detachment by the world leaders in economic and political fields is likely to contribute to the establishment, through the enforcement of truly just and equitable norms of conduct, harmonious relations among classes and nations.

The emphasis on detachment as an essential element in religious life and consciousness finds the most articulate expression in the Indian religious tradition. Christianity lays stress on hope as one of the ingredients in the religious attitude to life and in that life itself. For a humanist as for Gandhi, it seems, the sentiment of hope can be grounded only in faith in the basic goodness of man and in his inborn propensity to be drawn towards expressions of higher moral and spiritual values.

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